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Studies in the
Book of Acts

By G. S. EDDY





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STUDIES IN THE 10.7.16

BOOK OF ACTS

BY

G. S. EDDY

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SUGGESTIONS

1. These *Studies in the Book of Acts* are prepared chiefly for students and other young men. They cover a period of fourteen weeks, or ninety-eight studies. They are arranged for daily study, a portion of a chapter being assigned for each day, and suggestions or helps are given by way of comment or historical information.

Questions are asked each day to lead the student to think and study for himself. This is the chief aim of the studies—to secure daily study of the text itself.

A personal thought is added each day in applying the chief lesson of the passage to the student's own life.

2. The text followed has been that of the Revised Version. If at all possible the student should procure a copy and study from the Revised text.

3. By all means keep a note book to record the results of your daily study. It will enable you not only to preserve important points for future reference or for use in class, but it will help you to be systematic in your study and lead you to search for something worth recording.

4. Study primarily for your own spiritual growth. Give to your study the freshest and best time in the day, if possible the first half hour in the early morning.

5. Endeavour each day (1) to find what is the thought of the writer in the text itself, and (2) to apply this thought to your own life and to modern conditions.

If you do not discover some new thought for yourself, or make your own personal application of each study, it will be of little profit.

30 June 2. Rev. M. S. Kennedy

6. Answer each question before you proceed to the next. Do not first read over the whole page of directions.

7. If possible, form a Bible circle or class. Let each study for himself every morning, and all meet to compare notes every week. A review lesson is provided at frequent intervals. These will be profitable for class study. A circle where all prepare and all take part will be more profitable than a class where the leader does all the talking.

8. If necessary, consult a commentary. The *Cambridge Bible* or *Expositor's Bible* will be useful to the average student. The following books have been found most helpful, and have been freely used in preparing these studies. Professor Knowling in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*; Ramsay's *St. Paul, the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*; Professor Bosworth's and Mr. H. W. Oldham's *Studies in the Acts*; Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Letters of St. Paul*.

9. By all means procure a map upon which you can follow the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. A large cloth wall map of the Roman Empire showing the travels of St. Paul can be ordered from the Rev. R. Burges, office of the Sunday School Union, Jubbulpore, C. P. The Christian Literature Society, Madras, sells a similar map thirty-four inches by twenty-eight inches. Price Rs. 4-4.

10. A diagram of the Acts, the suggestion for which was borrowed from Professor W. W. White, will be found at the end of the book and may be consulted by the student from time to time.

11. Seek and expect a blessing each day. God has a message for you if you are in a condition to receive it. Begin and end each study with the prayer that your eyes may be opened to see new truth and that your heart may be opened to appropriate it. The end to keep in view is the formation of the habit of daily devotional study that will result in a larger, more abundant life.

INTRODUCTION

WE have before us one of the most interesting documents of ancient times, the first history of the Christian Church.

Midway between the Gospels and the Epistles, the Acts forms the background for a study and understanding of the New Testament. Both by early tradition and by modern scholarship the authorship of the book is ascribed to St. Luke, the "beloved physician" (Col. iv, 14) and the companion of the Apostle Paul. In his "former treatise," the third Gospel, which Renan declares to be the most beautiful book in the world, he describes "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." In the Acts, he tells us all that the risen Jesus continues to do through the disciples by the Spirit. The key verse of the book is found in i, 8, which states at once the prophecy of Christ, and the purpose of the writer to describe in the succeeding chapters of this book the proclamation of the Gospel in (1) Jerusalem (Acts i-vii); (2) in Judæa and Samaria (viii-xii); (3) throughout the Roman Empire, unto the uttermost parts of the earth (xiii-xxviii). Or, to speak more in detail, we have the origin of the Church in Jerusalem (i, 1-vi, 7), its extension through Palestine (vi, 8-ix, 31), to Antioch (ix, 32-xii, 24), to Asia Minor (xii, 25-xvi, 5), to Europe (xvi, 6-xix, 20), and to Rome (xix, 21-xxviii, 31). In the first twelve chapters, the narrative centres about the Apostle Peter, and from the thirteenth chapter, about the Apostle Paul. The author does not record the extension of Christianity to the south and east of Palestine, but *only mentions* events which carry the gospel towards Rome, with its passage from the Jew to the Gentile.

The author's apparent purpose is to write a history of the beginnings of Christianity for the edification of the Church. The facts he records are at once (1) a defence of the Christian religion against the denunciation of the Jews, and also (2) a defence of Christianity to the Roman state, to show that it was not hostile to the empire. Thus the author aims to show, on the one hand, how Christianity ceased to be considered as a Jewish sect, but became,

as Christ had intended, a world-wide religion admitting Gentiles, as such, without their first becoming Jews, in spite of the Jewish prejudice of the early disciples, who thought that Gentiles could be saved only by first becoming Jewish proselytes. On the other hand, by recording carefully all instances where Christians were protected or pronounced innocent by Roman officials, the author makes an indirect plea for the toleration and recognition of Christianity by the Roman empire.

The historical accuracy of the writer, who had with great care written his Gospel "in order" (Luke i, 3), appears throughout the book, which Jülicher pronounces an ideal church history. In the so-called "we" sections, the writer uses the first person and writes vividly as an eye-witness (xvi, 10-17; xx, 5-16; xxi, 1-18; xxvii, 1; xxviii, 16). Luke apparently was the only companion of the Apostle Paul who was with him at these times, and was not with him earlier. The nautical terms, the medical language, and the geographical details, are particularly accurate. Ramsay thinks the author's words "former treatise" (i, 1) should be translated "first", implying that St. Luke intended to write a third book from which he was perhaps prevented by martyrdom under the persecution of Nero.

Although there is a wide difference of opinion as to the time and place of writing, the book was probably written either during the latter part of the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68) or, more probably during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), while Christians were being persecuted, but before Christianity was finally proscribed and forbidden as a religion. The chronology of the apostolic period is difficult to determine, because no absolute date is found in Acts. A point of departure is found in Festus' arrival as procurator (Acts xxiv, 27), but authorities differ as to this date. Lightfoot places it in A.D. 60; Ramsay in 59; Turner, 58; Harnack, 56; and McGiffert, 55. This causes the difference in the various tables. The chronological table in these studies follows the newer chronology but occupies a middle position, avoiding two extremes. Before beginning a study of the book, read over the chronological table to get a general idea of the historical background of the period, noticing when and where the various Epistles were written. The abbreviation c. (circa) indicates that a date is approximate; a question mark (?) indicates that it is doubtful.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

I. THE JERUSALEM PERIOD. (c. A.D. 29-31) Acts i-vii.

From Pentecost to the death of Stephen.

Preaching in Aramaic and Greek to Jews of Jesus as Messiah.

14-37. Reign of Tiberias Cæsar.

c. 29. Crucifixion of Christ. (Birth of Christ, 6 B.C. or 4 B.C.)

30 or 31. Death of Stephen.

II. THE SYRIAN PERIOD. (c. A.D. 31-45) Acts viii-xii.

37-41. Reign of Caligula. 41-54, Reign of Claudius in Rome.

38-44. Herod Agrippa I, King in Judæa.

The evangelization of the Jews in Palestine, Phœnicia, Syria, etc.

The evangelization of the Samaritans (Acts viii, 5-25).

The evangelization of the Gentiles (Acts x, xi, 20-26).

31. Conversion of the Apostle Paul (in his thirtieth year).

34. Retirement to Arabia.

35. First visit to Jerusalem (Gal. i, 18; Acts ix, 26-30).

35-43. Residence in Tarsus, Syria and Cilicia (Gal. i, 21).

43. Arrival in Antioch (Acts xi, 26).

44. Death of James, the son of Zebedee (Acts xii, 2).

44. Death of Herod Agrippa I (Josephus).

45. Second visit to Jerusalem (Gal. ii, 1-10; Acts xi, 27-30).

III. THE PAULINE PERIOD. (c. A.D. 45-65) Acts xiii-xxviii.

41-54. Reign of Claudius in Rome.

47-49. First Missionary Journey (Acts xiii, 1-xv, 35).

49. Third visit to Jerusalem and Apostolic Council (Acts xv).

50-52. Second Missionary Journey (Acts xv, 36-xviii, 22).

50-51. Galatia, Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berœa).

51. At Corinth—thence 1. **1 Thessalonians.**

52. 2. **2 Thessalonians.**

52. 3. **Galatians.**

53. March. Fourth visit to Jerusalem (Acts xviii, 22).

53-57. Third Missionary Journey (Acts xviii, 23-xxi, 19).

54-68. Reign of Nero.

55. At Ephesus three years—

thence 1. A lost letter (1 Cor. v, 9).

2. **1 Corinthians.**

3. A lost letter.

56. In Macedonia (Philippi)—thence **2 Corinthians.**

- 57. To Corinth—thence **Romans**.
- 57. To Jerusalem (fifth visit), arrested Pentecost, May 28.
- 57-59. Imprisonment in Cæsarea (Acts xxiii, 23).
- 59-60. Voyage to Rome, Shipwreck, winter in Malta.
- 60-62. In prison at Rome (Acts xxviii).
- 60. Thence **Colossians** and **Philemon**.
- 61. **Ephesians**.
- 61. **Philippians**.
- 62-64. Apostle Paul's final journeys (?). Asia Minor and Crete.
- 62. (?) The Epistle of **James**.
- 64-66. Second Trial; **1 Timothy**, **Titus**, **2 Timothy**.
- 64. July 19. Burning of Rome. Neronian Persecution begins.
- 67. (?) Paul's martyrdom in Rome (Clement, Origen, Ter-
- c. 64-67. Circular letter, **1 Peter** (1 Pet. i, 1-v, 12). [tullian).

IV. THE SYNOPTIC PERIOD. (A.D. 65-80).

- 69-79. Reign of Vespasian in Rome.
- 37-100. Josephus (*Antiquities* 93-94. *Autobiography* 100).
- 66-70. Revolt of Jews against Rome. Destruction of Jeru-
- 69. The birth of Polycarp. [salem, 70.
- c. 65. The Gospel of **Mark**.
- 68. (?) Epistle to the **Hebrews** (c. 81, McG.) (Heb. x, 2-3).
- 70-80. The Gospel of **Matthew**, for Jewish readers.
- 70-85. The Gospel of **Luke**, for Greek readers.
- 80-90. The **Acts of the Apostles**.

V. THE JOHANINE PERIOD. (A.D. 80-100).

- 81-96. Reign of Domitian. Fierce Persecution of Christians.
- At the death of St. Peter the Apostle John settles in Ephesus.
- 81-96. Apostle John banished to Patmos by Emperor Domitian.
- 81-96. **The Apocalypse** in the reign of Domitian, or 68-70
- 85-95. **The Gospel of John**. [in the reign of Nero.
- 90-98. **The Epistles of John**.
- c. 98. The death of the Apostle John.
- 69-155. Polycarp, pupil of Apostle John (martyred, Feb. 23, 155).
- 70-150. Papias of Hierapolis.
- 130-200. Irenæus, pupil of Polycarp, Bishop of Lyons.
- c. 97. Clement of Rome. Epistle to Corinth.
- 90-100. Cerinthus and development of Gnostic systems.
- 103-162. Justin Martyr (*Apology* c. 153).
- 115. Martyrdom of Ignatius.
- c. 120. *The Didache*.
- c. 140. *The Shepherd of Hermas*.
- 150-220. Tertullian.
- 155-215. Clement of Alexandria.
- 160-170. Tatian (*Diatessaron* c. 170).
- 190. Muratorian fragment on the Canon.

The Promise of the Father

ACTS i, 1-5

v. 1. Who is the writer, and to what "former treatise" does he refer? (Compare Luke i, 1-4).

Jesus began, we have to finish. It is all one work. What did Jesus begin, and what have we to finish?

vv. 2-3. Recall vividly the events of these forty days and refresh your memory concerning them (cp. 1 Cor. xv, 3-8).

How does Jesus *shew Himself alive* to us to-day?

v. 4. Gr. *Charged strictly*, a strong word; how far does it apply to the present?

Jerusalem, the centre of the old law and of the new; the place of the crucifixion and of the resurrection; the place of their past defeat and future work; the place of danger and of need.

Here, at the foot of the cross, and at the feet of the risen Christ, we too may wait.

The promise of the Father. What was it, and whom was it for? Read Luke xxiv, 45-49, and Joel ii, 28-29. What part have I in this promise?

v. 5. Contrast these two baptisms and think of the meaning of each (cp. Luke iii, 16). Do I know in my own experience the meaning of this promise? if not, will I fulfil the command of verse 4? Let us remember that the Spirit is now given. We are living after Pentecost. On God's side all things are now ready. The only hindrance is in ourselves.

Personal thought. Jesus charged them—and us—not first to work but to "wait," not to toil but to "tarry," not to hurry into work unprepared, but to get right with God first. On the other hand, indolence and inactivity are not waiting.

With God's help, I will set myself to wait in prayer, in obedience to my Lord's command, that I, too, may receive His promise *not many days hence*.

The Promise of the Son

ACTS i, 6-11

v. 6. Contrast the disciples' idea of the kingdom with that of Jesus. What wrong ideas did the disciples have about the nature and extent and time of the kingdom?

v. 7. How much may we know concerning "times and seasons," and what should be our attitude toward things of the future? (cp. Mark xiii, 32-37; 1 Thess. v, 1).

"And so I go not knowing,
I would not if I might.
I'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than walk alone in the light;
I'd rather walk with Him by faith
Than walk alone by sight."

v. 8. In this verse, the keynote is struck of the contents of the whole book, and the great divisions of the Acts are marked. In these last words of Jesus, what part does He give to the Father, what to Himself, what to the Holy Spirit, and what to us in the coming of His kingdom?

Power, the mighty word *dunamis* (Gr.) from which comes our word *dynamite*.

Witness, one who first sees and then tells, first experiences and then expresses a truth. *My witnesses*, not only witnesses to Him but *His*. "I am His and He is mine."

Into what three sections does the author divide the propagation of the gospel, and to what chapters of Acts do they correspond?

v. 9. Whither was Jesus taken, where is He now, and what is He doing? (cp. Mark xvi, 19, 20).

vv. 10-11. What promises did Jesus Himself make regarding His coming again? What should be my attitude toward His coming?

This Jesus . . . shall come . . . in like manner. In what manner did He go, and how will He come?

Personal thought. The eternal promise of the Father has been re-affirmed in the last words of the Son. I have here both a command (v. 4) and a promise (v. 8). Have I received the promised power; and am I His witness?

The Preparation of the Disciples

ACTS i, 12-26

v. 12. Think of what the ascension meant to the early disciples, and to us (cp. Luke xxiv, 50-52).

A "sabbath day's journey" was fixed at 2,000 paces, or about three-quarters of a mile from the wall of the city. The Mount of Olives, from which He ascended, stands midway between Jerusalem and Bethany.

vv. 13-14. Where were the disciples (cp. Luke xxii, 12) who were present, and what preparation did they have for Pentecost?

Continued steadfastly, Gr., to give constant attention, to persist as in a siege, to hold on with strength, like wrestling Jacob. How many days did the disciples have to pray? Am I continuing steadfastly till I personally receive my Pentecost?

vv. 15-20. How many disciples of Jesus were there at this time? where were the rest? (See 1 Cor. xv, 6).

vv. 21-22. What were the essential qualifications of a witness in that day—and in this? In what two ways may I know the certainty of the resurrection?

vv. 23-24. *Lord . . . shew whom Thou hast chosen.* The early disciples always looked to their living Head for guidance in the choice of workers, and in all the problems of their life.

v. 26. We have no evidence that this Old Testament method was ever used after Pentecost. What means of guidance have we to-day?

Personal thought. Think of how these men must have prayed during those ten days! With what memories of their own weakness and past defeat, with what longing for the fulfilment of the mighty promise of their Master, they must have clung to their risen Lord! And, if they prayed thus, do I need less?

The Day of Pentecost

ACTS ii, 1-4

v. 1. What was the day of Pentecost in the Old Testament, and what was its significance? (See Leviticus xxiii, 14-17). Of the three Jewish feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, Pentecost was the second. The word means "fiftieth," as this great "feast of weeks" occurred fifty days after the second day of the Passover. It was the great Jewish harvest festival, when Jerusalem, thronged with multitudes from many lands, was celebrating the joy of harvest in presenting their first fruits to God. Christ, the first fruits, rose from the dead on the day when the first sheaf or the promise of the harvest was presented in the temple (1 Cor. xv, 20). Pentecost occurred at the feast of harvest, marking the birthday and great ingathering of the Christian Church.

vv. 2-3. *Suddenly.* "The whole description is so picturesque and striking that it could come only from an eye-witness" (Olshausen). By what two signs or symbols was the Holy Spirit typified, and what was the meaning of each?

v. 4. How many received the gift, and what was the immediate result of the Spirit's presence? (cp. Acts i, 8).

Note, it does not say there was either wind or fire, but a sound *as of* wind and a sight *as of* fire. The first symbol, which was audible, typified the work of the Spirit as sudden, invisible, independent of man, irresistible and all-pervasive. Wind was a familiar emblem of the Spirit (cp. Ezekiel xxxviii, 9; John iii, 8; xx, 22). The second sign, which was visible, signified the work of the Spirit as illuminating, cleansing, consuming, and empowering in burning utterance. Fire was also an emblem of the Spirit (cp. Matt. iii, 11; Isaiah vi, 6; Malachi iii, 2). Think of the significance of each of the words: *mighty, fire, each, all, filled, Holy.*

Personal thought. Pentecost was not a day but a dispensation, not an ending but a beginning. The eternal promise of the Father, fulfilled by the Son, was given to "each" and "all," and to me. The Spirit has now been given because Jesus has been glorified (John vii, 37-39). Have I received my share of Pentecost? Have I obeyed the command, "Be filled with the Spirit"?

The Multitude Amazed

ACTS ii, 2-15

vv. 5-13. What power drew the audience, and what was the significance of this sign?

What countries were represented, and how many can you locate upon the map?

Typical of its future spread, men of various tribes and tongues heard the gospel on this "birthday of the Christian Church."

Dr. Schaff suggests that the miracle consisted not in speaking in foreign languages, but the usual ecstatic utterance of the gift of tongues (1 Cor. xiv), which was interpreted by the Spirit to the hearers, for many counted them not great linguists but drunken. Does the context support this view?

"The emphasis in these words lies in the fact that men of various nationalities heard the praises of God spoken in the language of their birth. Is not this a third sign, supernatural and transient like the first two (vv. 2, 3), symbolic of the universality of the gospel message? Does it not foreshadow the evangelization of the world? Thus the three signs given at Pentecost strike the three notes in Acts i, 8—irresistible power, inspired utterance, universal testimony.

"The symbols passed away: the reality remains" (Oldham).

vv. 14-21. *Peter.* What change has taken place in this man, and how do you account for it? (cp. Luke xxii, 61).

What was the significance of the prophecy to which the Apostle Peter appeals, and what meaning has it for *me*?

Peter refers to the fourfold work of the Spirit in Joel ii, 28-32—*vision, speech, power, salvation*. How were these fulfilled at Pentecost and in the centuries since?

Personal thought. To-day, the message of salvation has come to me, in my own tongue. But many have not yet heard the glad tidings, and I am a living witness. The Spirit is for all flesh, and for *me*. What is my privilege with regard to the Holy Spirit, and my responsibility to my own people?

The First Christian Sermon

ACTS ii, 22-36

As the earliest extant Christian apologetic, the great sermon is most important. Study it carefully.

What is the one great thing which the Apostle seeks to prove, *i.e.*, what is the object of his sermon?

What is the subject of his sermon and its threefold division in verses 22-24?

To what three witnesses does the Apostle appeal, in proof of the resurrection, in verses 25-33?

What was his conclusion (v. 36) and what lessons do you learn for your own life from this sermon?

vv. 22-24. The Apostle begins with the title "Jesus of Nazareth" (part of the inscription on the cross) and ends with the mighty claim "Lord" and "Christ."

He dwells upon (1) His miraculous life, (2) His death, (3) His resurrection. We have here only a brief outline of the sermon, yet think how startling, how incredible, how incriminating this must have been to the Jew.

vv. 25-33. In support of the resurrection the Apostle appeals to three witnesses:

1. *The Scriptures* (cp. Psalm xvi, 8-11). Note Peter's argument from this Psalm.

2. *The Disciples* (v. 32). Many witnesses who had not only seen Him alive for 40 days, but who were in living, daily intimacy with him. How far can I personally witness to the living Christ?

3. *The Holy Spirit* (v. 33). There was a visible and audible work of the Spirit, something to "see and hear", as evidence of the living Christ. There should be a living evidence to-day in our lives also if we are filled with the Spirit. We should be able to point men not only to a past historic fact, but to a present experience.

v. 36. Contrast God's relation to Christ and man's. Think how these last words would cut to the heart the hearers. Their Messiah had come at last and they had killed him?

Personal thought. Peter, who had denied his Master with cursing and swearing before a servant girl, formerly so cowardly and sinful, stands before us as a new man in Christ, filled with the Spirit, bold and fearless! What a change! Has that change taken place in me?

Pentecostal Power and Results

ACTS ii, 37-47

vv. 37-40. What two expressions show the attitude of the hearers? What two conditions does the Apostle demand, and what was the meaning of each? What two results are promised to those who accept Christ, and to whom is the promise offered?

v. 41. Compare the results of the work of the risen Christ, by the Spirit, through the disciples, with those of Jesus' earthly ministry (cp. John vii, 37-39; xiv, 12).

vv. 42-47. Study carefully, in these verses, the beautiful picture of the life of the early church. What were the hidden springs of its life? Compare these with the conditions of the church to-day. In these seven apostolic principles, do you discover any forgotten secret of apostolic life and power?

1. *Apostolic teaching*, i.e., the life and words of Christ repeated much as we have them in the Gospels (Matt. xxviii, 20).

2. *Fellowship*, in a community of Christian love, each helping others.

3. *Breaking of bread*, probably the Lord's Supper, which was connected with a common meal, though in those days "every meal was a sacrament."

4. *Prayers*, both public and private, Jewish and Christian, in the synagogue and at home, as in iv, 24.

5. *Community of goods*, not absolute or compulsory, but as a spontaneous expression of love; fulfilled to-day by service and sacrifice.

6. *Public worship* (v. 46), in temple and synagogue, now full of new meaning.

7. *Single-hearted joy*, in praising God and serving men. How many of these seven apostolic principles are fulfilled in the church of to-day or in your own daily life, and how many are forgotten?

Personal thought. This apostolic life in the Spirit is normal for all time and for me. Miracles pass, but the mighty realities remain. Symbols fade, but the substance endures. Times change, but "He remaineth," the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

The Lame Man Healed

ACTS iii, 1-10

Read through this vivid narrative, and note each detail. Note who were present, when and where they met, how the man was healed, and the effect upon the man, upon the people, and upon the apostles (iv, 3).

v. 1. Of many wonders and signs (ii, 42), this is selected as the miracle which was the occasion of the first persecution.

The usual times for prayer were : (1) at the time of the morning sacrifice, (2) in the afternoon, about the ninth hour (*i.e.*, three o'clock), and (3) in the evening at sunset (Schürer). The custom of prayer thrice daily was carried over into the Christian Church.

v. 2. *Daily at the door*, just "outside God's best," for none deformed or unclean could enter the holy place.

v. 6. *What I have, I give.* What have I to give to needy men ?

In the name of Jesus the Christ, i.e., in the power of this name, by His authority. The name stands for the Person and all that He is.

What lesson may I learn for my own life in verses 1, 6, and 10 ?

The Second Sermon

ACTS iii, 11-26

Read the two parts of this sermon (12-16, 17-26) and compare it with the former sermon. What are the similarities and dissimilarities ?

What place and what titles are ascribed to Jesus in this sermon ?

vv. 12-13. What was the source of the miracle in the opinion of the people and of the Apostle ?

vv. 13-16. Notice the three striking contrasts in these verses.

v. 16. What was the source of power and what the means in this miracle ?

vv. 19-21. R.V. What are the terms of this first Christian prophecy ? Why can there be no forgiveness and no blessing without repentance ?

vv. 22-26. What argument does the Apostle make in these verses ?

Personal thought. *Ye killed the Prince of Life ; whom God raised from the dead.* My sin slew Christ. Christ crucified for me, and I with Him ; Christ raised for me, and I with Him !

Have I realized these two truths in my own life ? (Col. iii, 1-4).

Before the Sanhedrim

ACTS iv, 1-12

vv. 1-2. By whom was Peter's sermon interrupted, why were they angered, and what treatment had the same parties given to his Master? (cp. Luke xx, 1, 27, etc.)

The official priests and leaders were angry and jealous at simple laymen and ignorant fishermen instructing the multitude, and also at the doctrine of resurrection, which the Sadducees denied and which incriminated them all.

vv. 3-4. What was the result of the persecution to the apostles and to the church?

Why was not the church disheartened and scattered as on the arrest of Jesus? (cp. Mark xiv, 50).

vv. 5-6. Compare this company with those who had witnessed the trial of Jesus (cp. John xviii, 12, 13; Luke xxii, 66). The seventy-two members of the Sanhedrim or Jewish Supreme Court, were chosen from the high priestly families, the Scribes, and the lay elders. They had tried and condemned Jesus.

v. 7. The *ye* is emphatic and contemptuous.

vv. 8-9. Peter speaks with all respect for the authority of the Sanhedrim, yet shows the unfairness of persecuting them for a *good deed* (as they had done to his Master before him).

vv. 10-12. Note the incredible boldness of this simple man before the aristocracy of the nation in charging them with murdering their Messiah and shutting them up to Jesus as their only Saviour,

In Him (v. 10 R.V.) do I stand whole this day.

The *corner stone* referred to by Jesus before the same "builders" a few weeks before (cp. Matt. xxi, 42; Ps. cxviii, 22).

v. 12. Meditate upon this verse and apply it to India.

Personal thought. *There is no other name among men.* Not Moses, not Buddha, not Muhammad, not Zoroaster, not Krishna. (Why are these impossible?) One, and only One, was incarnated and crucified, is risen and ruling. "He must reign," in India and in my heart.

The Charge of the Sanhedrim

ACTS iv, 13-22

Read carefully this dramatic scene, contrasting the attitude of the Sanhedrim and of the apostles.

v. 13. Contrast the influence and social position of these two fishermen with that of their judges (vv. 1, 5).

Contrast the boldness of the two with the fear of the seventy-two (vv. 16, 21). What was the cause of this? On which side was God? Contrast the boldness of Peter now, with his cowardice a few weeks before (Luke xxii, 56-62). How do you account for this? (v. 13).

vv. 13-18. Think of the staggering facts confronting the Sanhedrim :

(1) Jesus affirmed to be the risen Christ, their Messiah, and His tomb empty.

(2) Simple fishermen, bold like their Master, working miracles in His name.

vv. 19-22. Note the dilemma which Peter places before them, as his Master had done (cp. Luke xx, 3, 4). *We cannot but speak* if we too have seen and heard the Lord Jesus.

Personal thought. *They had been with Jesus*, this had been their supreme privilege, their sufficient training, their unique distinction, placing them above the kings and rulers of the earth. And this privilege is mine !

An Apostolic Prayer Meeting

ACTS iv, 23-31

Read this account and study it as an example of apostolic prayer.

v. 23. Note their unity as fellow-members of one body.

v. 24. Notice how the attitude of God's sovereign power is emphasized in this passage.

vv. 25-26. What use did they make of Scripture in their prayer and life?

v. 27. Note the parties who were against Christ in that day, and compare the forces arrayed against Christ to-day.

v. 28. What comfort was there for them and for us in this truth?

v. 29. What two things did the apostles ask, and how were they answered? (cp. Mark iii, 14).

vv. 30-31. What sign denoted the coming of the Spirit, and what did it signify?

Personal thought. *The place was shaken*, so is every place where true prayer is offered. Not physically, as in that day, but spiritually. Something happens when we pray.

Let us learn this secret of apostolic prayer.

Apostolic Fellowship

ACTS iv, 32-37

v. 32. How large was "the multitude" of believers now? (cp. iv, 4). *One heart and soul* implies entire harmony in affection and thought. What principle underlies this verse, and how far could it be applied to-day?

v. 33. What two things characterized this early church? How far are they true to-day of the church in India?

v. 34. *For . . . for.* In what two ways was this grace manifested? What advance do we see here in the method of distribution? (cp. ii, 45). Note that giving was not compulsory, nor was there an equal distribution of all property, but only according as there was need. Do we find indiscriminate charity taught in the New Testament? What should be our attitude to mendicants to-day? (cp. 2 Thes. iii, 10, 12).

vv. 36-37. How was Barnabas true to the new name which the apostles had given him? (cp. Acts xi, 23).

Contrast Barnabas with Ananias (ch. v, 1, 2).

If time permits, begin the review of the first four chapters of the Acts, noting the title, the thought, and the teaching of each chapter.

Let us take advantage of this short lesson to ask ourselves whether we are personally appropriating the truths that we have studied thus far.

Personal thought. *The things which I possess.* Whose are they, mine or God's? For whom should I use them—for myself or the kingdom? Am I an owner or a steward?

In the apostolic days each held his possessions as a steward of God; in trust for the community. How do I look upon my possessions and talents?

"Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives *himself* with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungry neighbour, and Me."

Review

ACTS i-iv

Review these four important chapters, noting the contents and the chief lessons of each.

Contrast thoughtfully the conditions in the early church with the church of to-day. What lessons have we to learn from this apostolic community?

If time permits, let us note some of the following points:—

(1) **Apostolic preparation** (Acts i, 4, 8). Notice the example, the command and the promise of Christ set before the early disciples. Have I received this preparation of the filling of the Spirit? This is the chief lesson of this book. Let me not evade it.

(2) **Apostolic prayer** (Acts i, 14, 24; ii, 42; iii, 1; iv, 24). Study these beautiful examples of prayer for the Spirit; prayer for guidance; prayer for continued blessing; prayer in public worship; and prayer in the hour of need to turn defeat into victory.

(3) **Apostolic power** (Acts i, 8; ii, 2, 22, 41; iv, 4, 7, 13, 29, 31). Note the power promised, exemplified, illustrated, demonstrated, admitted, realized, typified.

Is there any difference in the power of God's Spirit displayed in the apostolic days and in these days? If so, is the change in the Spirit or in us? What is the condition of apostolic power to-day?

(4) **Apostolic preaching** (Acts ii, 22-36; iii, 12-26; iv, 8-13). From the three sermons recorded in these three chapters can you draw any lessons as to the character, method, and results of apostolic preaching? What was their central theme? What emphasis did they place upon the Holy Spirit, and what upon personal witnessing?

(5) **Apostolic principles** (Acts ii, 42-47). Review the principles which dominated the early church. Contrast them with the conditions of to-day, and apply them to the Indian Christian community. What is the great lesson you have learnt thus far from these first four chapters?

Apostolic Discipline

ACTS v, 1-11

Read carefully this account. Note the nature of the man's sin, the agent of the sin, and its effect upon himself, his family, and the church.

vv. 1-2. *Kept back part of the price.* The same verb is used in Joshua vii in the LXX (the Greek Version of the Old Testament). Compare the sin of Ananias and that of Achan, and note the punishment accorded to each.

v. 3. Who had caused his sin, and why was it a sin against the Holy Ghost?

vv. 4-6. Note that what he gave was not compulsory in those days, the land and the money were both in his own power. What then was his sin, and against whom was it committed? (cp. Ps. li, 5).

vv. 5-10. What exemplary punishment was accorded to these two? Think of other similar cases in Scripture. How does God punish to-day, and what will happen in the last judgement?

v. 9. Did not their sin consist in—(1) covetousness, (2) pride (v. 2), (3) hypocrisy, (4) sinning against the Holy Ghost? Like Judas, he had given place to Satan, and he had "brought his lie into the heart of this Spirit-filled community."

If hypocrisy consists in endeavouring to appear other and better than we are, are we entirely free from this deadly sin?

v. 11. Note the salutary effect of discipline upon the early church. In what respects is discipline needed to-day in the church in India?

If this sin had been covered or condoned, if it had spread and become common, what would have happened to the early church? What has happened in the church to-day?

Personal thought. *Part of the price.* Ananias wanted the apostolic life. There was a certain price he had to pay for it, a single and surrendered heart. He was not willing to pay the price. Have I kept back part of my heart? Of my time? Of my plans? Of my prayer? Am I willing to pay the price to-day of the apostolic life?

Apostolic Witness

ACTS v, 12-32

vv. 12-14. In what places did the early church meet? (cp. ii, 46).

What was their condition, and what was the attitude of non-Christians toward them?

Compare thoughtfully with the conditions to-day in India.

vv. 15-16. What is the unconscious influence which falls like a shadow upon those whom you meet?

How was this healing the fulfilment of their Lord's work and of their own prayer? (cp. iv, 30).

vv. 19-20. How important their preaching seemed in heaven! How important does ours seem?

vv. 21-26. What effect would this miracle have upon the disciples, upon the people, on the Sanhedrim?

vv. 27-28. What was the attitude of the Sanhedrim?

Would they not remember Christ's deliverance from the tomb as the apostles had now escaped from prison? (cp. Matt. xxviii, 11-13).

Notice they fear to mention the name of Christ (cp. iv, 17, 30).

vv. 29-32. "Peter's defence is a perfect model of concise and ready eloquence, and of unanswerable logical coherence" (Alford). Contrast the boldness of Peter with the fear of the rulers.

Note the place he gives to Christ, and the titles he ascribes to Him.

What two gifts has Christ for Israel, and what two witnesses does Peter cite?

v. 32. What is the great condition of receiving and retaining the Holy Spirit? How did Ananias sin in this respect? How have we?

Personal thought. *Go ye, speak to the people all the words of this life* (v. 20). Note that to-day there is often the same opposition, the same aversion to the name of Christ; the same fear of joining the church, and the same Spirit working in us.

To us the angel messenger cries, "Go, speak!" If we hold our peace 'tis strange that the very stones do not cry out!

The Counsel of Gamaliel

ACTS v, 33-42

v. 33. *Cut to the heart.* Gr. sawn asunder. What was it that so angered them?

v. 34. Gamaliel, the teacher of Saul (xxii, 3). The most enlightened and broad-minded rabbi of his time. Compare the teacher and pupil.

vv. 35-39. Read carefully this remarkable speech of Gamaliel. What are its three divisions, and what is his argument?

Note the two with whom Gamaliel compares Jesus—Theudas, a false prophet, leading the people astray, and finally beheaded; and Judas leading the people in rebellion against Rome. "Josephus describes four men bearing the name of Simon within forty years, and three, that of Judas within ten years, all of whom were instigators of rebellion."

Contrast thoughtfully the life and teaching of Jesus with these two men.

Note Gamaliel's compromise and policy of expediency. He neither accepts nor rejects Christ.

Contrast his whole speech with that of the Apostle Peter; compare "We cannot fight against God," and "We must obey God" (v. 29).

vv. 40-41. What did the apostles suffer, and how did they bear it? (cp. Deut. xxv, 1-3). Do I count it an honour to suffer for the name of Christ?

v. 42. Picture the daily life of Peter and the rest and compare it with our own daily life.

Personal thought. *If it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them* (v. 39). Think of these words in the light of the subsequent history of Christ's kingdom; throughout the Jewish persecutions and tortures of Rome, and the opposition to Christianity in each new missionary field.

Apply these words also to your own life. Are my words and my work of men or of God? Will they be fruitless or abide?

The First Apostolic Committee

ACTS vi, 1-15

v. 1. In Jerusalem there were the Aramaic-speaking Jews, natives of Palestine; and the Greek-speaking Jews, born in foreign countries, now resident in Jerusalem. "In Judæa the use of the Hebrew language was regarded as the symbol of patriotism and zeal; that of the Greek, as a token of foreign sympathy. The Hellenists were, therefore, an unpopular minority in Jerusalem" (Rendall).

v. 2. *Serve tables, i.e.,* tables of food at which the poor sat, or where money was distributed (Matt. xxi, 12).

How does this tendency to secularization affect our modern life and you in particular?

v. 3. What were the three qualifications for useful men in that day, and how would you apply them, in your own words, to men of to-day?

v. 4. In what order of importance did the apostles place secular work, preaching, and prayer? And what were the qualifications required for secular work? (v. 3).

vv. 5-6. Who were the deacons? What were the three steps in their appointment? Note, all the seven have Greek names (cp. v. 1).

v. 7. Of the 20,000 priests serving in "courses" or relays, all would have opportunity of attending the meetings in Solomon's Porch, and many were converted.

vv. 8-10. What lesson do you learn from the character of Stephen? (cp. vv. 3, 5, 15). Among the 480 synagogues in Jerusalem, men of the same class or language met together; as, "Libertines," deported Jewish captives afterward freed; and Jews from Alexandria, Cilicia, etc.

vv. 11-15. What were the two chief charges brought against Stephen? Compare them with the charges brought against his Master (Mark xiv, 57, 58; xv, 29).

What do you suppose Stephen really said about the temple and the law? (cp. Mark xiii, 1, 2; Matt. v, 17-21).

Personal thought. *We will continue steadfastly in prayer, and the word* (vv. 2, 4). Let us also put first things first, following the order of the apostles: (1) prayer, (2) preaching, (3) practical organization. Let us resist the temptation to secularization or to forsake the Word of God, either in study or in preaching.

Stephen's Defence

ACTS vii, 1-19

The disciples are now in the greatest peril of their history. Stephen's reported attack upon the law arouses the Pharisees and the Scribes from the spirit of tolerance advised by Gamaliel (v. 38). His supposed prophecy against the temple angers the Sadducees, who had charge of the temple.

Both charges aroused the anger of the people, as they had been aroused against Christ a short time before.

Read now as much of Stephen's speech as time permits, and try to find his underlying thought.

Does Stephen admit or deny the charges brought against him?

Note that "this was the first time that a believer in Jesus was charged with disloyalty to the national faith."

In his defence he does not so much reply to their charges against him personally but refutes the wrong conceptions of his accusers.

Do not think that this is a dry rehearsal of Old Testament history. It is quivering with feeling. It ends in a mighty witness for Christ that rent Judaism and Christianity asunder.

vv. 1-8. Stephen goes back beyond Moses, to whom the Jews appealed, to Abraham.

vv. 9-19. From these verses, or from the original account in Gen. xxxvii, what lessons can you learn from the life of Joseph? *God was with him* (v. 9). Is He with you?

Personal thought. *As the face of an angel* (vi, 15). "The irritation produced by the consciousness of being unjustly accused constitutes a peculiarly severe test of character. Evidently one of the results of the Spirit's presence in Stephen was the ability to endure such accusation without becoming bitter" (v. 15).

Are you able to meet unfair criticism or accusation in this quiet spirit?

Stephen's Defence (*Contd.*)

ACTS vii, 20-36

Compare Stephen's account of Moses with the Old Testament record (Ex. ii, iii, etc.)

vv. 20-22. From these verses, or from the Old Testament, what lessons do you learn from the life of Moses?

vv. 23-30. "Moses was 120 years old when he died" (Deut. xxxiv, 7). Could we not roughly divide his life into forty years of preparation (in Egypt); forty years of discipline (in Midian); and forty years of service (in the wilderness)? Are not these the three great periods in every man's life? Apply these to the life of Jesus; to the Apostle Paul; and to your own life.

Personal thought. "I have seen the affliction of my people . . . I will send thee" (v. 34). What affliction does God see to-day in India? What must be His thought as He beholds idolatry, caste, superstition, the widows of India, etc.? Have you seen the affliction of your people? Will you let Him send you to them?

Stephen's Defence

ACTS vii, 37-50

Read these verses, and, if possible, the whole defence of Stephen. His text may be found in verses 51-53. His main thought is not a defence of himself, but to show Israel's constant opposition to God. They had refused Moses in Egypt (v. 25), they had disobeyed in the wilderness (v. 39), they had turned to idolatry even when they had the tabernacle (vv. 41, 43). The temple itself was of no avail if their hearts were wrong with God (v. 48). And now also they were resisting Christ as Moses had prophesied (vv. 37, 51, 53).

v. 37. To whom does Moses refer, and how does Stephen apply his prophecy? (cp. Deut. xviii, 18).

vv. 38-43. What lesson do you learn for your own life from this passage?

vv. 44-50. What is Stephen's argument in these verses, and what lesson may you learn from them?

Note three points in his long defence: (1) In his summary of Jewish history, he refutes the charge that he is a blasphemer, and shows his reverence for the law. (2) Though he does not consider the temple essential to true worship, he does not attack the temple or the Jewish privileges, but insists on the heart being right. (3) He shows that Israel has always resisted God's chosen deliverers.

Personal thought. Are you open to new truth coming from any quarter? Can you recognize truth, even when advocated by those you dislike, or against whom you are prejudiced?

Stephen's Defence (*Concluded*)

ACTS vii, 51-60

v. 51. How had Israel in the past and in the present resisted God's Spirit and His leading? Do I at any point in my life resist the Holy Ghost?

v. 52-53. Can you recall instances of those who had been persecuted for righteousness' sake in the Old Testament, and in the New?

Stephen's wonderful defence has failed to convince his hearers, therefore, in a prophetic spirit, with love and boldness, he arraigns the supreme court of his nation. What three accusations does he make against them?

v. 54. What was it that especially angered the Jews?

vv. 55-56. Contrast Stephen with his accusers.

Did Stephen's vision reveal any new fact about Christ?

How did the apostles know that Jesus was with God? (cp. ii, 33; John xv, 26, 27).

Was Jesus "standing" to receive His first martyr? (cp. Heb. viii, 1; x, 12). Is Jesus interested in all that I am doing to-day?

vv. 57-58. In what three stages did Stephen's death take place? What was the Jewish method of stoning? (cp. Lev. xxiv, 14; Deut. xvii, 5-7).

Saul's position seems to indicate that he was the chief witness and was leading the persecution against the Christians (cp. xxvi, 10, 11).

vv. 59-60. Compare Stephen's life and death with that of his Lord. Note his boldness (v. 51), his love (v. 59).

"If Stephen had not prayed, the church would not have had Paul" (Augustine).

Personal thought. *I see the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.* This was the witness of Stephen and of the early church. This was the power that overthrew Judaism and conquered Rome. The living Christ is the one need of India and of my life.

How far can I witness to Christ? Do I see Jesus standing at the right hand of God?

Review

ACTS i-vii

Review the life of Stephen and his defence.

What part did he play in the history of the church, and in the separation of Christianity from Judaism?

Review chapters i-vii in the light of the key-verse (i, 8). Note the contents of each chapter.

Spend as many days as necessary in reviewing these great chapters until you make them your own.

Select some appropriate title or name for each chapter that will represent its contents and write these in your Bible. Memorize these names and be able to think through the contents of the book thus far. See the diagram on Acts.

What great lesson do you learn from this first section of the book of Acts?

Remember that the object of your study is the deepening of your own spiritual life. Pause to reflect whether your daily Bible study is as profitable as it might be, and to ask yourself whether you are appropriating in your own life the truths that you are studying day by day.

The purpose of Bible study is "to fasten on the mind certain great ideas which should become habits of thought and result in a large, clean, strong life."

Am I fulfilling this purpose in my daily study?

Philip in Samaria

ACTS viii, 1-13

We have now finished the first section of the Acts i-vii.

In viii-xii we have the extension of the Gospel to the Samaritans, to the Ethiopian minister and to the Gentiles. In this chapter we see the risen Christ working for Samaria, where He "began" a few years before beside Jacob's well at Sychar.

Philip, the evangelist, Stephen's fellow-deacon, had probably narrated to Luke, when they met in Cæsarea (Acts xxi, 8-10), the substance of chapters vi-viii, and Saul adds the agonized confession, "and I was consenting unto his death."

vv. 1-4. *On that very day* (Gr.). What was the occasion for the persecution of all Christians, and who was the leader in the movement?

Why did the apostles remain in Jerusalem and what did the others do who were scattered abroad? How was the persecution providentially used to extend the movement?

v. 5. Find the city of Samaria on the map. How far was it from Sychar? Who were the Samaritans, and how far had they been prepared for Philip's visit? (cp. John iv, 35, 39-42).

The Samaritans were of Jewish origin but with an admixture of Gentile blood. They worshipped the God of the Jews, held to the Pentateuch and expected the Messiah, but were divided from the Jews "by a separate priesthood, a rival temple, and a bitter antagonism" (Rendall). Thus they were a bridge between Judaism and the Gentiles. What was their origin? (cp. 2 Kings xvii, 24-28).

vv. 6-8. Who was Philip, and what was his character? (cp. vi, 3).

What was the nature of Philip's work, and its result?

v. 8. *There was joy in the city.* There is always joy where Jesus reigns, and where He is saving people.

vv. 9-11. What three circumstances in the career of Simon does Luke mention to show his influence over the people.

vv. 12-13. What was the result of Philip's work among the people, and upon Simon? Was he a true believer?

Personal thought. *They went about preaching the word* (v. 4). Not the apostles, but all the laity; not for money, but at the risk of their lives; not when it was easy, but fleeing from the persecution that arose upon the death of Stephen. Do you to-day carry the message to every man you meet? Have you a message for India?

Simon's Mistakes

ACTS viii, 14-25

Carefully read this section and make a study of the character of Simon. What were his aims and motives? What was the secret of his success?

vv. 14-15. Note the connexion of the mother church with all the new communities that were founded. Such visits were common.

What was the purpose of the visit of Peter and John?

v. 16. What was the condition of these Christians?

In the preceding account, what four or five evidences do you find of their genuine conversion?

Let us note that every Christian has the Spirit if he is indeed born again (cp. Rom. viii, 9; John iii, 5). But not every Christian is "filled with the Spirit" (cp. Eph. v, 18).

v. 17. Was the laying on of hands always necessary for the reception of the Spirit? (cp. Acts x, 44).

vv. 18-21. What were Simon's three mistakes with regard to the receiving of the Spirit, and what is the counterpart of these errors to-day?

vv. 22-24. What is the first condition of the receiving of the Spirit?

What other conditions are mentioned elsewhere? (cp. Acts v, 32, etc.)

v. 25. Think of the risen Christ directing the whole Samaritan campaign.

Personal thought. *They prayed that they might receive the Holy Ghost (v. 15).* Note how every new community and every fresh convert is filled with the Spirit (cp. xix, 2).

Am I perpetuating Simon's three errors in looking to man, in thinking to obtain the gift by my own merit instead of by God's free promise, and in looking for "power" instead of a Person, who must control all my life? Is my heart right before God in this matter, and am I praying for others also that they may receive God's greatest gift?

Philip and the Ethiopian

Acts viii, 26-40

Contrast Philip's former successful revival with this unknown desert way.

Note how he is guided at every step.

Read carefully the whole account and picture the scene vividly in your imagination.

Find on the map the great trunk road that Philip would have to follow for two days on the way to Gaza (which was eight days from Egypt).

Ethiopia was vaguely used to describe the territories south of Egypt, while Candace was the official name of a dynasty of female rulers.

vv. 26-28. What do you learn of the position and character of this Ethiopian, and of Philip's implicit obedience to God's guidance?

vv. 29-31. Note the steps by which Philip is guided from Samaria to this man, and trace God's plan throughout the interview.

vv. 32-35. What was the passage which the Ethiopian was reading? Notice the providential guidance in this. How did the Ethiopian treasurer understand the passage, and how would Philip interpret it? Could we paraphrase it thus?—"In the violence and injustice done to Him, the fair trial due to Him was withheld. Who shall declare the wickedness of the generation in which He lived? For His life is violently taken from the earth" (Knowing; cp. Isaiah liii, 4, 7, 8).

vv. 36-40. What was the result of this personal work?

Was Philip miraculously or naturally led away? Re-read the account and study the example of Philip as a model Christian worker.

In how many respects are you like him and in how many unlike?

Personal thought. *And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near.* Are you listening for the Spirit's still small voice? Are you willing to speak to those who need God's message all about you? Are there not men on every hand, who, like this Ethiopian, would receive Christ if He were rightly presented, but who would have to make the pathetic answer, "How can I, except some one shall guide me?"

The Conversion of Saul

ACTS ix, 1-9

What do you know of the previous life and training of this man, Saul? Who was his teacher? What was his birthplace? How was he related to the Roman government, to Greek culture and to the Jewish religion? (cp. Phil. iii, 5-8; Acts xxii, 3, etc.).

Read carefully the entire account and picture it vividly before your imagination.

Compare the Apostle's own account of his conversion, and note each point of additional information which is not given by Luke (cp. Gal. i, 15, 16; Acts xxii, 5-16; xxvi, 1, 13-18).

v. 1. His every breath was threatening and slaughter. Contrast his intensity with the tolerance of his teacher (cp. vv. 38, 39).

v. 2. Find on the map Damascus (which was eight days' journey from Jerusalem), "that most enduring city in the world," known to Abraham, and taken by David.

vv. 3-6. What did Saul see and hear? How did it revolutionize his whole life and thought in his relation to the Messiah and to the Law; to Christians and to the world?

Contrast God's guidance of Saul, step by step, to this last point.

vv. 7-9. What was the effect upon Saul's companions, and upon Saul himself, physically? Imagine his condition of mind during these days of waiting.

Note the crushing facts that overwhelmed the consciousness of Saul: (1) Jesus was alive, and not dead as he had supposed. (2) He was the Messiah, and Saul was persecuting Him. (3) He was a pure and holy being, who had conquered sin and death, who could give to Saul all that he craved for and could not find under the Law.

"Here we have a suggestive instance of the activity of the invisible Jesus. Do you ever wonder how Jesus spends His time, year after year, and century after century? Does time hang heavy on the hands of Him whose life in Palestine revealed so active and energetic a spirit? He is still the Saviour of man, working upon the lives of men. We are His workmanship."

Personal thought. *I am Jesus* (v. 5). "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me." Have I received Christ once for all as my Saviour and Lord? Day by day does He manifest Himself to me as a living, bright reality? (John xiv, 18-21). Is Christ to me the most certain spiritual reality of my life, the central fact of my consciousness? Does He say to me, "I am, Jesus"?

Ananias and Saul

ACTS ix, 10-19

vv. 10-17. Make a careful study of the character of Ananias and of the guidance of the Spirit.

v. 10. Note his sensitiveness to guidance. Am I listening daily for the Spirit's voice, or following "afar off"?

v. 11. Note the definiteness of the guidance: the street, the house, the man. Does not God's Spirit guide us in this way to-day unconsciously?

What is the signification of the words, "Behold, he prayeth"?

vv. 15-16. Note carefully that for which Saul is chosen. Observe the order in which these three classes are mentioned to whom he is to be sent, and how this purpose was fulfilled in his after-life. What lesson do you find for your own life in these verses?

v. 17. Notice Ananias' instant obedience and his sympathy and love. Note also how each believer and Christian community in Acts began the Christian life with the filling of the Spirit.

The chief persecutor has now become the chief witness.

What lesson do you learn from the conversion of Saul?

Personal thought. He is a chosen vessel—he must suffer (vv. 15, 16). He who had been separated from his birth, specially chosen of God to stand before nations and before kings, was called especially to suffer. He was saved to serve. He was saved to suffer. To us, also, it hath been granted, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

For what am I chosen, and how far am I willing to suffer for Christ's sake?

Saul in Damascus

ACTS ix, 20-30.

vv. 19-21. What was Saul's first act after his conversion, and what did he try to prove?

v. 22. What arguments would Saul bring forward to prove that Jesus was the Christ?

Contrast Saul's method of entering Damascus with his former intention (ix, 1, 2).

After v. 22 Saul goes away into Arabia. Read carefully his own account of his conversion in Gal. i, 15-17. Why do you suppose he went away into Arabia? What revolution in thought was taking place in his mind as he was changed from a Pharisee of the Pharisees to the bond slave of Jesus Christ? How would he spend his time there, and what great points of doctrine would be altered in his mind? Arabia was the name applied to the long strip of land east of Palestine. Damascus was, at times, under the king of Arabia.

vv. 23-25. When Paul returned from Arabia with renewed power, and his views more clearly formulated, what effect did his preaching have upon the people?

v. 26. The disciples could not believe in Saul's conversion, but suspected that he had entered the fold to make havoc of the church. Are there any men or classes of men that we count too hard for God to reach?

v. 27. Note this added touch in the character of Barnabas. Are we also seeking to bring men forward and to bring out their latent powers?

vv. 28-30. Imagine Saul's return to his own home; his meeting with his family, and suffering "the loss of all things" (Phil. iii, 8). Did his father turn him out?

Personal thought. "I conferred not with flesh and blood. I went away into Arabia." As we recall the period of preparation and times alone with God in the lives of such men as Abraham, Moses, David, John the Baptist, Paul, and our Lord Himself, does it not suggest a need in our own lives?

Has there been any period in my life when I have been much alone with God that He might speak to me? If not, can I not make the study of this book an occasion for much time of communion with God?

The Extension of the Gospel in Judæa

ACTS ix, 31-42

v. 31. After the counsel of Gamaliel and the conversion of Saul, there was a lull in the persecution in Palestine.

Notice the beautiful picture of the church. In what two respects was it a model for the church to-day, and how far are these fulfilled in India? This summary statement in ix, 31 shows that Luke is about to enter upon a new period of apostolic history (*i.e.*, the work of Peter and the admission of the Gentiles). Observe the gradual expansion of the church throughout this entire section.

vv. 32-35. Notice how Peter is led on this tour, through Lydda, Joppa and Cæsarea. "Observe how special men are chosen for special service." Philip was on his way to Cæsarea and Saul had been in Cæsarea (viii, 40; ix, 30). Yet Peter is called to work this miracle. So God has a special work for each and all. What work has He for you?

vv. 36-39. What do you learn of the character of Dorcas?

Note that Peter seems to have had an especial power of healing (cp. iii, 6; v, 15; ix, 34).

vv. 40-41. Compare Peter's action with that of his Master. How many times did Christ raise the dead, and how many were raised by the apostles? (cp. Mark v, 37-41, etc.)

vv. 42-43. In bigoted Jewish Joppa, Peter is staying with a tanner or "chuckler," a trade necessitating contact with dead animals, which was most hateful to the Jew. Does this indicate any broadening of Peter's sympathies? Why was he chosen to receive the first Gentile? (ch. x.)

Personal thought. The church in that day was *edified* and *multiplied* (v. 31); built up and built out; deepened in spiritual life, and extended by evangelistic zeal, because it was centred in Christ and controlled by the Spirit.

As we compare the church in those days with the church in our own time, what thought does it suggest? What lack is there in the church to-day, and what need is there in my own life of "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost"?

The First Gentile Convert

ACTS x, 1-16

Read carefully vv. 1-8 and study the character of Cornelius. How many of these statements could be applied to my own life and how does this outcaste Gentile put me to shame, with all my privileges in Christ?

vv. 1-2. Note Cornelius' influence upon his relatives, his servants and his soldiers (cp. 7). What is my influence upon all those with whom I come in contact?

Cornelius was not a full proselyte (*i.e.*, circumcized, baptized, and admitted to the temple), but one of that large class of adherents who were called in Acts "devout," "worshippers of God," etc. (cp. x, 2, 22; xiii, 16, 26; xvii, 4).

These men, disgusted with polytheism, idolatry, and the immorality of Gentile life, were attracted by the pure monotheism and lofty morality of the Jewish religion. They observed the Sabbath, the decalogue, and some of the ceremonial laws as in xv, 20, 21.

vv. 3-4. When and how did Cornelius see his vision? And what lesson may we learn concerning God's interest in our prayers and in those who are not Christians from verse 4?

Memorial (R.V.) Gr. a sweet savour of the sacrifice which brings us to the remembrance and favour of God. Our prayers may be a sweet savour of remembrance unto God (cp. Lev. ii, 2; Ps. cxli, 2; Heb. xiii, 15).

vv. 5-8. Note the definiteness of God's guidance and compare with the guidance of the Spirit in the previous chapters (*i.e.*, Philip and the Ethiopian, Ananias and Saul, Peter and Cornelius).

Read carefully vv. 9-16, if time permits.

What lesson do you learn from God's guidance of Peter and His dealings with Peter's prejudices? Have I any such prejudices?

Personal thought. *Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God.* None are forgotten; all that I have prayed, and all that I have given (or failed to give), are remembered of God. If all that I do is thus held in loving remembrance by God, should it not lead me to live more with Him and for my fellow-men?

And not my prayers only are heard but also the prayers of those that are without. How many in this great land are feeling after God, if "haply they may find Him." Not one is forgotten.

Peter's Vision

ACTS x, 17-34

Read vv. 9-23. Study carefully Peter's vision, and note how God leads him step by step. He is led on, in the Spirit, by the irresistible logic of events. God manifests Himself both to Cornelius and to Peter when in prayer. At the "sixth hour" and the "ninth hour" (vv. 3, 9), *i.e.*, 12 and 3 o'clock (cp. iii, 1). They were evidently in the habit of praying thrice daily, according to the Jewish custom.

vv. 13-15. What was the teaching of the Jewish law, and what the teaching of Christ regarding unclean meats? (cp. Lev. xi; Mark vii, 15, 19). How do you apply the principle of x, 15 to meats and to men?

v. 17. What do you think that the vision meant?

v. 18. Note that the men arrived, by the guidance of the Spirit, just at the right time. Would Peter have received them an hour earlier?

vv. 19-23. *Three men seek thee . . . I have sent them.* Many things that we cannot interpret are in the plans of God, as in Peter's case. He guides us one step at a time. May we go with Him and with men, "nothing doubting."

v. 23. Peter goes from Jewish Joppa to Gentile Cæsarea. With its theatre, amphitheatre, temple, elegant palaces and marvellous artificial harbour it was, in a sense, the Roman capital of Palestine. Find Joppa and Cæsarea on the map.

vv. 21-28. Picture the anticipation of Cornelius and the Gentile community. Why was it unlawful for Peter to mingle with the Gentiles? (cp. John xviii, 28). To enter a Gentile house rendered a Jew ceremonially unfit for worship.

vv. 29-33. Peter obeys God. Cornelius' prayer has to wait for its answer till Peter is willing to obey. Are many of our prayers hindered by men who will not obey God? *Thy prayer is heard . . . send therefore.* Does this imply that Cornelius was praying for further light and salvation?

Personal thought. *I should not call any man common or unclean.* Not only to Peter, but unto me hath God shewed this. Is not the deepest denial of the brotherhood of man that the world's history has produced found in the caste system in India? Shall I permit these false distinctions to enter into the Church of Christ or into my heart? Pride is the possession of a privilege which I am unwilling to share with another. In the pride of caste do I count any man common or unclean?

The Gentile Pentecost

ACTS x, 35-48.

v. 35. Weigh well every word in this verse. What is the principle taught, and how does it apply to India? What is God's attitude towards those that do not yet know Christ? (cp. Rom. ii, 12-16).

vv. 36-43. Study carefully this sermon of the Apostle Peter. Make an outline of his address. What new ideas do you find emphasized and what advance in thought over his earlier addresses?

v. 36. Do you carry the sense of the "good tidings" of the Gospel with you? Have you a salvation worth passing on?

"Lord of all," and "judge" of all (v. 43). In Peter's earlier addresses He is spoken of as Jesus, the Christ, the Prince of Life, the Saviour and the Righteous One. What is Christ to you?

vv. 38-42. Peter refers to Christ's life and death and resurrection. Later on we find a fuller development of the teaching regarding the significance of His death (cp. 1 Peter ii, 24).

v. 43. Peter makes no demand for circumcision nor for works of the law, yet he says nothing also of baptism, nor of the gift of the Spirit. Perhaps he was not prepared to fully admit the Gentiles into the church. The moment he held up Christ and asked them to believe on Him, their faith responded and the Spirit fell.

v. 44-48. Compare the coming of the Spirit to the Gentiles and to the Jews at Pentecost. What were the visible effects and how was Peter led to receive them into the church?

Personal thought. *In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable of Him.* The Jews confined God's working to themselves, and counted all others out-castes, "heathen." Are we also not in danger of narrow views, which exclude large sections of humanity? Where is God's Spirit working to-day? Where is He not working? Cornelius and his fellow-Gentiles heard the word only when Peter's prejudice and plans were overcome, and he was ready to obey God. How many young men, to-day, are willing to lay aside their own plans and ambitions and obey God in preaching the Gospel to all India?

The Guidance of the Spirit

ACTS xi, 1-18

vv. 1-3. How did the Jewish Christians receive the news of the conversion of the heathen at the Gentile Pentecost? On what grounds did they object? (cp. John xviii, 28). The Jewish prejudice against the Gentiles is well represented in the Talmud. "They were thought to have fallen away from God, to have lost human nature, and to have been transformed into animal nature. The Holy Spirit had been taken from them, and God could not work upon them" (Weber).

vv. 4-18. Study very carefully Peter's defence of his action. Notice how he traces everything to God's guidance. Compare Peter's action at this time with his breaking caste in Galatia. What was his fault in the latter place? (cp. Gal. ii, 11-15).

v. 12. The Spirit "bade me go with them, making no (caste) distinction." Note how slowly Jewish prejudice gave way before the teaching of Christ and the plan of God. Are we in India slow to-day to receive all men into full fellowship and brotherhood, making no distinction of caste or race?

vv. 17-18. They could not withstand God, and admitted that the Gentiles could be saved, yet they do not see that the middle wall of partition was broken down (v. 19), nor that the Gentiles are fellow-members and brothers of one blood. Cornelius is admitted as an exceptional case. Only later did the Apostle Paul teach the full truth (cp. Eph. ii, 11-19).

Personal thought. *The Spirit bade me go with them.* Step by step Peter's prejudice has been overcome. He sees the vision, goes with the messenger (x, 20), begins to preach, is forced to baptize them (x, 47), has to remain and eat with them, and finally break caste altogether.

Note again how God's Spirit guides Philip and the Ethiopian; Ananias and Saul; Peter and Cornelius. In each case He gives guidance to the preacher and conviction to the hearer, who is baptized and goes on his way rejoicing. So God's Spirit is guiding us if we will but listen and obey. God has a message for many men whom we meet. Let us not fail to give it.

The Church at Antioch

ACTS xi, 19-30

v. 19. Find Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch on the map. Why did they still confine themselves to the Jews?

v. 20. Antioch becomes the first great Gentile centre, the future base of operations for the missionary expansion of the church. Antioch was the capital of the Roman Province of Syria, and one of the three largest cities of the Roman Empire. "It was famous for its commerce, art, and literature, and infamous for its vice and frivolity." We learn from Josephus of the large number of Jews and proselytes resident in the city. The work done at Antioch is described in three stages (vv. 20-22; 23-24; 25-26). Study these with great care, for from Antioch the European and the western world heard the gospel.

vv. 20-22. Who were the preachers? What was their theme, and what was the result of their preaching?

Note Christ's eagerness to co-operate with men who will follow His plan and give the gospel to the Gentiles. Is He equally ready to co-operate with young men to-day for the evangelization of India and Asia?

vv. 22-26. Make a careful study of Barnabas (cp. iv, 36, etc.). How far would the description in v. 24 apply to my life? What great lesson may we learn from Barnabas in his confidence in Saul and his leading him into Christian work? (cp. ix, 27).

Why were the disciples called Christians? How often does this word occur in the Bible? (cp. xxvi, 28; 1 Pet. iv, 16).

vv. 27-30. This famine occurred in A.D. 46.

Personal thought. *The disciples were called Christians, i.e., Christ-ones. They called themselves "brethren" or "saints" till the second century. The Jews called them "Nazarenes," but the Gentiles, as they saw their life and heard the name of Christ constantly on their lips, called them "Christ-ones," because of their relation to Christ.*

Does my life bear witness to Christ? Do my neighbours and friends and relatives recognize me as a follower and witness of Christ? Am I a true Christian?

Peter in Prison

ACTS xii, 1-10

v. 1. Herod Agrippa was the grandson of Herod the Great. "After an adventurous, checkered life, he won the favour of the Emperor Caligula. He became king over all the territory ruled by his grandfather, Herod the Great. His policy seems to have been to please the Jews and to preserve the favour of Rome. He died miserably in the zenith of his fame in A.D. 48."

vv. 2-4. James was beheaded in A.D. 44, and Peter was kept in order to be put to death as a great popular spectacle to gain further popularity for Herod. Note how Peter was guarded. How many times had he been in prison before, and why were such precautions taken?

v. 5. Contrast the power of Rome and of Herod with the power of the infant church. What was behind each? Let us not make "calculations of comparative forces which leave out the great factor of Christ's omnipotence" (Maclaren). (cp. 1 John iv, 4). Prayer was made earnestly for him. Do we use, to the full, this mighty force of prayer, the greatest power given to men to wield? What are you accomplishing by your prayers?

v. 6. On the eve of his execution, Peter was sleeping (cp. Mark iv, 38; 1 Pet. v, 7).

vv. 7-10. Note God's guidance of Peter. How does God guide us to-day?

Personal thought. *The iron gate opened to them of its own accord.* So do all gates of providence open before us in the path of God's will. God closes one gate and opens another. James glorified God in death (v. 2) and Peter was delivered for twenty years more of useful service in life. So God has a plan for each life; the way will open if we are ready to walk in it. God's care is all about us.

"God 's in His heaven,
All 's right with the world."

Peter's Escape

ACTS xii, 11-25

v. 11. When Peter was *come to himself* (cp. Luke xv, 17). To whom did he attribute his deliverance?

v. 12. John Mark—the companion of Peter and Paul—evidently came from a Christian family in whose house the Christians met. Remember it was the last night, and the last watch of the night—almost morning. What were they doing at this hour?

vv. 13-17. Note the vivid description as of an eye-witness. Perhaps Mark gave Luke this account.

v. 15. Were they expecting an answer to their prayers? *It is his angel*, seems to imply the Jewish idea that Peter's guardian angel had assumed his form and his voice.

v. 17. Note Peter's effort in taking every human precaution, even though the Lord has just worked a miracle. Who is the head of the church at this time?

What James is here referred to? (cp. xii, 2; xv, 13; xxi, 18; Gal. ii, 9). We do not read of Peter in the Acts after this.

vv. 18-19. What was the cost of the miracle to the soldiers? Why is God loath to work a miracle save when He is compelled to do so?

v. 20. "Tyre and Sidon were dependent upon the products of Herod's territory, particularly of Galilee, for their food supply" (cp. 1 Kings v, 11).

vv. 21-25. To what does Luke attribute the death of Herod? If possible, compare Josephus' account (*Antiquities*, XIX, viii, 2). Contrast the angel's attitude to Peter and to Herod (**vv. 7, 23**).

vv. 24-25. Luke's usual summary shows that he is about to begin a new division of the book.

Personal thought. *Many were together praying.* With no apparent hope of release, they held on in prayer throughout the night, fulfilling their Lord's command to pray and not to faint.

"Lord, what a change within us
One short hour, spent in Thy presence will avail to make!
We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong—
Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we should ever weak or faithless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer;
And peace and joy and power are with Thee?"

Review

ACTS i-vii, viii-xii

Review rapidly the contents of the book up to this point, noting some title for each chapter, which will recall its contents to your mind. Compare with the Diagram of Acts.

Especially review chapters viii-xii, noting this period of growth as the church expands in widening circles from Jerusalem through Judæa and Samaria towards the uttermost parts of the earth.

Read again the key-verse of the book—Acts i, 8.

Select some such titles as the following, and write them in your Bible for reference :

I. FIRST PERIOD. Acts i-vii, in Jerusalem.

1. The Upper Room.
2. Pentecost.
3. Solomon's Porch.
4. The Sanhedrim.
5. Ananias and Sapphira.
6. The Deacons.
7. Stephen.

II. SECOND PERIOD. Acts viii-xii, in Judæa and Samaria.

8. The Ethiopian—an African—a son of Ham (Gen. x, 1).
9. Saul—an Asiatic—a son of Shem.
10. Cornelius—an European—a son of Japheth.

Here one finds an individual from each of the three continents, and from each of the three races—Semite, African and Aryan, perhaps.

Follow out this expansion on the map.

What great lesson do you learn for your own life from each of these two sections of the book ?

Personal thought. *Jesus began* (i, 1) during His earthly life, as recorded in the Gospels. Jesus continued, as the living Christ actively directing His church in the apostolic days. Jesus will *finish*, through us and those who follow, until the kingdoms of this world (India included) have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. He is directing the whole plan of campaign to-day.

The First Missionary Journey

ACTS xiii, 1-12

vv. 1-3. Study carefully this picture of the Gentile church at Antioch, which is now to be the basis of operations and point of departure for all St. Paul's missionary journeys. *Prophets* were those who spoke messages which they received directly from God (bearing either upon the present or upon the future), under special temporary inspiration (cp. 1 Cor. xiv, 29-33).

Teachers were those who had a permanent gift of instruction; teaching what they had learnt.

v. 2. What was God's message for Barnabas and Saul? How do you suppose it was delivered? (cp. xii, 28).

v. 3. Note the intense spiritual life of that day: fasting, prayer, and service (v. 2). Notice the co-operation of the Spirit, the church and the missionaries.

vv. 2-6. By whom were the missionaries sent forth? By whom are you? Find all these places on the map: Selucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos.

vv. 7-12. Note carefully the vivid description of this dramatic scene. Here first the apostle stands before a governor, an official of the Roman empire. Christianity and superstition, truth and error, light and darkness are contending for the faith of this governor and for the faith of the Roman empire.

Contrast the motives, the aims and the ends of these two men and of these two forces represented before the governor. Compare with conditions in India to-day.

Personal thought. *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.* As Paul was separated from his birth—separated unto the gospel—so God has a plan for your life.

He has called you to separation from sin, separation from the world, separation from your selfish life, that you may be separate unto Him and the work for which He has called you.

To what work is God calling you?

In Antioch

ACTS xiii, 13-26

vv. 13-16. Trace the journey on the map. Why did Mark leave them? (cp. xv, 38).

Compare the disciples in the synagogue with our Lord in Nazareth (Luke iv, 16, 17, 18).

Ramsay thinks that the Apostle Paul, in the enervating climate of Pamphylia, was attacked by a return of chronic malaria (his "thorn in the flesh,") hence he sought the high, cool climate of Antioch. Mark was unwilling to follow a sick man into "the perils of robbers" in that unknown and dangerous country.

vv. 16-26. Study carefully this great example of Paul's preaching to the Jews. Compare it with that of the Apostle Peter and of Stephen. Note God's guidance in Israel's history; His election in Egypt and the wilderness, preparing a people for Christ. What Old Testament characters are mentioned, and what lessons may we learn from each?

Why was David a "man after God's own heart"?

What was the tribe of Saul of Kish and of Saul of Tarsus? (cp. Phil. iii, 5). Benjamin was the fighting tribe. Israel's war cry was "After thee, oh Benjamin!" (cp. Gen. xlix, 27; Hosea v, 8).

Contrast the characters of these two men.

v. 16. *Ye that fear God, i.e., the Gentiles.* Notice Paul's offer of salvation to the Jews and Gentiles alike in vv. 16, 26, 46.

Personal thought. *A man after God's own heart* (v. 22; cp. 1 Sam. xiii, 14). Saul began with great promise; David fell into great sin, greater perhaps than Saul ever committed. But Saul always excused himself, while David confessed his sin, and humbled himself before God (cp. Ps. li). Was not this what God found to love in David? He was a man of honest heart. Am I like David, well pleasing to God, or like Saul? Am I seeking to please men—to cover my sin, to make excuses?

Oh to be a man after God's own heart!

The Sermon at Antioch

ACTS xiii, 27-41

Study carefully vv. 27-41, noting the outlines of Paul's thought and the arguments he uses to prove that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah.

What is the meaning of his quotations in vv. 32, 36 of Ps. ii, 7; Is. lv, 3; and Ps. xvi, 10?

vv. 38-41. What offer and what warning does the apostle set before the Jews?

Let us study this example of the apostle's synagogue preaching.

We have one great sermon in each of the three missionary journeys. This is an example of his preaching to the Jews. The sermon at Athens (ch. xvii, 22) is an example of his preaching to the Gentiles, while the sermon at Miletus (ch. xx, 18) is an example of his preaching to Christians. These are priceless records of great importance to us. Note Paul speaks of Jesus' death and resurrection (vv. 29, 30).

He speaks of Him as Saviour—fulfilling the prophecy of the Messiah to God's people in the Old Testament.

Paul shows that the promise given to David could not be "sure and permanent," if its king, the Messiah, were to end his reign in death. David died, but Christ, the Son of David, is risen, is the ever-living One, the Messiah, and the Saviour of His people Israel. The law commands, but cannot save (v. 39). Christ can forgive and save. Perhaps at this statement he saw the scorn in the faces of his audience, so that he adds the warning of v. 40.

Personal thought. *Behold I work a work in your days* (41). These words were cited from Habakkuk i, 5 (about 600 B.C.). The people, in his day, believed that God had worked at the time of Abraham and Moses, but were blind to His work in their day. Paul is speaking here about A.D. 47. The Jews were ready to believe that God had worked in the days of Abraham and Habakkuk, but were blind to God's working in their own day through Christ.

To-day, also, God is at work. We do not doubt that He worked in the time of Abraham and of Christ, but as truly He is working to-day in your life and in India. What is God trying to do for you and your land?

A New Departure

ACTS xiii, 42-52

vv. 42-43. What was the effect of Paul's preaching, and how did he follow it up?

vv. 44-45. Why were the Gentiles glad and the Jews jealous?

"Do you feel jealousy or discomfort when you find another more successful than yourself in Christian work? It is a satisfaction to Jesus Christ to see him successful. Can I not share in the satisfaction of Jesus?"

vv. 46-47. Note this great crisis in the life of the Apostle Paul, and this bold innovation. Note his desire to justify it by Scripture. What does the quotation show? (Is. xlix, 6; xlv, 22).

At his conversion, Saul had been called to the Gentiles (ix, 15).

In his vision in the temple, he had been sent far hence unto the Gentiles (xxii, 21). In Antioch he had been ministering to the Gentile community. In Cyprus he had been successful before the Roman governor. But now, publicly, for the first time, he turns from the Jews to the Gentiles, who are ready to believe; thus fulfilling God's plan.

vv. 48-49. How many believed, and what was the effect on the whole district?

vv. 50-52. What form did the persecution take? What was the effect upon the apostles and on the disciples?

Personal thought. *The word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region.* Everywhere Paul goes he spreads the missionary spirit. His Christians were saved to serve. From Ephesus, all they in Asia heard the word from his converts (xix, 10). From Thessalonica the word sounded forth through all Greece (1 Thes. i, 8). Paul himself was looking to the whole Roman empire and to the uttermost parts of the earth (xiii, 47).

Have you preached the gospel in the streets of your own village?

Is your church, your institution, your association carrying the gospel throughout all the district? Are there people in the villages within an hour's walk of where you live, who have never heard the gospel from your lips?

In Galatia

ACTS xiv, 1-18

vv. 1-7. Study carefully these verses, finding Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe on the map.

What forces were combined against the apostles in verse 5?

The apostle is now preaching in South Galatia, which included Phrygia, Pisidia and Lycaonia.

Probably these are the churches to which the apostle writes in his Epistle to the Galatians. We have no record of any church being founded by St. Paul in North Galatia.

vv. 8-9. Note Luke's threefold statement, as a physician, as to the cripple's condition. What is the condition of healing and of blessing throughout the New Testament?

vv. 10-14. Note the belief of the superstitious Galatians in the incarnation of the gods (Gal. iv, 14). Paul, as the active worker, is counted the messenger of Jupiter, while Barnabas, as the more dignified and passive personality, is supposed to be Jupiter.

Lystra was a centre of Roman government, Greek civilization and commerce. The Apostle Paul always sought such centres. In the "mofussil" his speech would not be understood in Greek. The apostle always follows the line of Roman organization, Greek thought, and the great commercial routes. His chief success was among the educated. Contrast this with conditions to-day.

Personal thought. The people received them as "gods" at one moment (v. 11) and stoned them the next (v. 19). At Malta Paul was counted as a murderer and in the next minute a god (xxviii, 4, 6). Our Lord was received in Jerusalem with hosannas as God's Messiah and crucified by the verdict of the same fickle mob before a week had passed.

Does not all this teach us in the words of our Lord to "beware of men." How trifling is man's favour, how insignificant is the worst that man can do to us. Let us live, not for the praises of men, but for the glory of God; not for the opinion of men, but to be well pleasing in His sight.

The Return Journey

ACTS xiv, 19-28

vv. 19-20. Imagine this scene. Think what it would mean if you were stoned and dragged, as dead, along the streets of your city.

vv. 21-23. Find Derbe upon the map. See how near Paul and Barnabas were to Tarsus, Antioch, and home, and how easy it would be to leave these dangerous cities where they were hated. They were now at the limit of the Roman province. They turned back to complete their work in the Roman territory. What was their twofold purpose in re-visiting the churches?

They returned to the very cities where they had been stoned and persecuted. As they were Roman citizens the magistrates had no power to kill or permanently banish them. Moreover, they apparently confined themselves to quiet work among the Christians, avoiding public preaching to the Jews. Yet how brave they were!

vv. 24-26. Retrace upon the map their homeward journey. Only at Perga did they break new ground, where, owing to Paul's sickness, they had not preached before. Picture their return to Antioch, the great missionary centre, where they were so loved, after an absence of several years. They had now fulfilled their work of establishing (21), deepening (22), and organizing (23), the churches in South Galatia.

vv. 27-28. What account did they give of their work? To whom did they ascribe the credit, and what light does this passage throw on Luke's purpose in writing the Acts in the one item of their report, which he especially mentions?

Personal thought. *The work which they had fulfilled.* What a glad sense of finished work, well done! Men had entered into eternal life, which would never end. Churches had been founded, which would never die. How blessed to be able to say, "I have finished the work which Thou hast given me to do" (John xvii, 4).

Have I finished or am I now accomplishing, in my church, in my association, in my institution, the work which God has given me to do? I shall pass this way but once. In the last day, as I stand before Him, after my life-work is finished, shall I be able to say, "I have finished the work which Thou hast given me to do"?

The Council at Jerusalem

ACTS xv, 1-12

vv. 1-5. Read carefully these verses, and ask yourself, Who constituted this Council? What was the question presented to the Council for decision? Why was it the most important question before the early Church? Think what the effect would have been if the Council had decided in favour of the Pharisaic party in *v. 5*.

v. 1. What was the way of salvation under the law (1) as taught by Christ (John iii, 14-16); (2) as taught by Paul (Acts xvi, 31)? *Except ye be circumcised . . . ye cannot be saved.* Are you giving practical recognition to the fact that every man who takes Jesus as his Lord and Christ is a saved man, no matter to what church he belongs, or how much he differs from you in social habits and religious views? Do you really count him as a brother?

vv. 5-12. What was the argument of the Pharisees? They had not learnt the lesson of Acts x, 34, 35. For their attitude to the Gentiles see Eph. ii, 11, 12.

What was Peter's argument? To what three facts does he appeal? What is his opinion of the law and of the condition of salvation? What was the attitude of the Apostle Paul? (cp. Rom. iii, 23; iii, 9-12). The Pharisees contended that the law was God-given, the Jews were the chosen people, and to say that the Gentiles could be saved directly, or that the Jew did not need to keep the law, was to deny the law which God Himself had given. Paul saw that his apostleship, the universal aspect of Christianity and the gospel itself were at stake (Gal. ii, 2, 5). If they were circumcised and trusted to the law, the liberty of the Gospel, the grace of God, and the death of Christ would all be in vain (Gal. ii, 21; v, 1-4).

Personal thought. *All the things that God had done with them.* They had not tried to use God; they had let God use them. They had not sought God's help in their own plans, but had tried to help God in His plans. They were but earthen vessels, instruments in God's hands, and to Him they gave all the glory.

Think of all that God was able to do *with them*. How much has God been able to do with you? Have you been humble enough for God to trust you with power?

The Council at Jerusalem (*Contd.*)

ACTS xv, 12-21

vv. 12-18. Study carefully the argument of James. What are his two chief reasons for not asking for circumcision? What is the force of his quotation from the prophets? (cp. Amos ix, 11, 12).

vv. 19-21. What middle position does James propose, and what is the significance of each of the four terms which he suggests? Let us review the arguments of the Council in vv. 1-21. The great question at issue is, On what terms can the Gentiles be saved? The Pharisees say only by keeping the law. Peter appeals to three facts. (1) God has already given the Gospel to the Gentiles at Cæsarea. (2) God, who knows the heart, has already given the Holy Spirit, showing His approval and acceptance of the Gentiles. (3) God puts the Gentiles on the same level with the Jews, saving them by faith.

Paul appeals to the signs and wonders that God had granted in token of His favour upon their work, and points to the ingathering of the Gentiles as God's own work.

James appeals (1) to the conversion of Cornelius (note its importance in this great discussion) and (2) to the prophets. The rest of men, *i.e.*, the Gentiles, were to be saved according to God's plan. He therefore proposes a compromise of expediency, out of deference to Jewish sentiment, in order that the Gentile converts may not offend the Jews in every city (v. 21): (1) to abstain from "pollutions of idols," *i.e.*, food used at idol sacrifices (cp. v. 29; 1 Cor. viii, 10; x, 25-28); (2) fornication (showing the moral condition of the Gentile world); (3) things strangled (cp. Lev. xvii, 13); (4) from blood (cp. Lev. xvii, 12).

Which of these are moral and which ceremonial? which are essential and which are matters of expediency?

Personal thought. *The residue of men.* The rest of men, *i.e.*, "the heathen," were beyond the pale of Jewish sympathy! they were outcaste and neglected. Remember that we all were among this outcaste residue to the Jews. The Greek in turn despised the Jew; and the Romans had contempt for all others than their own people. All this was due to isolation and to ignorance. How contrary to Christ's wide spirit of brotherhood! What is my attitude toward the depressed classes, the lower castes, the neglected districts? God's plan includes all. Do I exclude from my sympathy and fellowship the outcaste "residue of men?"

The Great Decision

ACTS xv, 22-35

v. 22. What parties were of one mind in this decision? (cp. xv, 28).

vv. 23-29. Study carefully this earliest epistle in the New Testament, written probably in A.D. 49 (see the Chronological Table).

What were the terms of this great decree, and what reasons had led to the decision?

v. 23. "The brethren" (Jewish) "unto the brethren" (Gentiles). How wonderfully the Spirit of Christ in His great brotherhood, which knows no distinction of nationality or caste, is conquering their Jewish prejudices and exclusiveness!

Note the greeting (v. 23); the Judaiser's teaching condemned (v. 24); Barnabas and Saul praised as those who had "given up their lives" for Christ; the unanimous decision (vv. 28, 29). "Most Jews had a profound conviction that physical contact with the Gentiles was morally contaminating. Jewish Christians would shrink from Gentile Christians, and would be unwilling to eat the Lord's Supper with them. James proposes that the Gentile believers make certain concessions that will enable the two parties to unite in one church."

We find the ultimate ground reached only in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, which we shall next study. But at this time the majority were not ready to accept that position owing to their hardness of heart.

v. 28. Was this statement justified? What lesson does it teach us?

v. 29. Compare this whole question with the caste problem in India to-day. Is any caste distinction possible within the church, if we have the spirit of Christ?

vv. 30-35. What was the result of the decree and its effect upon Antioch?

Personal thought. *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.* Here we have divine guidance and human freedom; obedience on man's part, yet the full use of all his powers; God and man are working together; God is stooping to man's need and guiding as he is able to bear it. Man is obeying God's Spirit as he is able to follow step by step. Do we seek the guidance of the Spirit in every decision of our lives?

The Galatians

In connexion with the Jewish-Gentile controversy and the apostolic council, let us hastily read the Epistle to the Galatians, or as much of it as time permits. Note the Apostle Paul's solution of this great question and its bearing upon the history of the church.

The following is an outline of his argument for the gospel of faith:—

- Gal. i. 6-10. It is the only gospel.
- 11-12. It came by revelation.
- 13-14. It was not the result of his early education.
- 15-17. He did not receive it from man.
- 18-24. He did not receive it at Jerusalem.
- Gal. ii. 1- 5. Paul's contention admitted in the case of Titus.
- 6-10. His contention admitted by the apostles.
- 11-13. His contention proved by Peter's action.
- 14-15. His contention proved by his own exposure of the law and defence of the gospel.
- 16-21. Justification is by faith not works.
- Gal. iii. 1- 5. Proved by their experience.
- 6- 9. Proved by Scripture (Abraham).
- 10-14. The law condemned; Christ saves.
- 15-18. The covenant not annulled by the later law,

THE LAW OF WORKS

- Gal. iii. 19-20. It was not direct from God, but mediated.
- 21. It was impotent.
- 22. It was to reveal sin.
- 23-29. It was a prison to convict, a tutor to prepare.
- Gal. iv. 1- 7. It kept in bondage.
- 8-11. It was weak and beggarly. Why return?
- 12-20. Personal appeal.
- 21-31. The law testifies against itself.
- Gal. v. 1. Conclusion. "Therefore stand fast" in the liberty of the gospel.

Review

ACTS xiii-xv

Let us review now this period of missionary expansion, recalling the contents of chapters viii-xii. Review in detail the events of the first missionary journey, following the journey upon the map, and fixing it firmly in mind.

"This period of progress is perhaps the most important in the book, if not in the history of the church at large" (Hort).

Fix clearly in mind the question that was at issue—On what terms could the Gentiles be saved? What was the relation of Jews and Gentiles within the church? Were they to observe caste or not? Compare the whole controversy with the modern question of caste in India. How far is it similar and in what respects does it differ?

What are the principles that lie at the bottom of each? Note the great result of the first missionary itineracy as described in xiv, 27, "that God had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles."

If the Gentiles could be admitted, "there was now no intelligible limit for the church short of universality" (cp. xiii, 29, 40, 47; xiv, 27; xv, 9; xviii, 8).

If Christianity is the universal and ultimate religion, and if the kingdom of God should be extended throughout the whole world, are we fulfilling our duty? Or, like the Pharisaical party, are we hindering the progress of the Gospel, thinking only of our own salvation?

What great lesson do we learn from this first missionary journey?

Personal thought. Many Jews did not believe in missions to the Gentiles. In the church to-day many are unconsciously blind to God's great purpose of missions. They feel there is work enough in their own district; or they fear that self-support will suffer. But "give and it shall be given unto you."

"There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to poverty" (Prov. xi, 24). Am I in sympathy and in active co-operation with Christ's purposes for missions in India?

The Second Missionary Journey

ACTS xv, 36—xvi, 5

vv. 36-41. Study carefully these verses that show the inception of the second missionary journey which begins at this point. What prompted Paul to undertake this journey? (cp. 1 Thes. ii, 17-20). Who was right and who was to blame in the division between Barnabas and Saul? How did God overrule their mistake for good? Do we find any other instance of Barnabas' generous trust and loyalty to a friend? (cp. ix, 27; xi, 25). Did the later history of Mark justify Barnabas' confidence? (Col. iv, 10; 2 Tim. iv, 11).

Paul chose Silas, who was both a Jew and a Roman citizen (xvi, 37).

xvi. 1-5. What lesson do we learn from the Apostle Paul's choice of Timothy? He was always bringing other men forward in the work, *e.g.*, Barnabas, Silas, Titus, Luke.

v. 2. Timothy was *well reported of*. He lived a clean life and had a good reputation. There was no stain upon his record, no reproach connected with his name.

Note this characteristic which takes precedence of all others in the choice of the seven deacons (vi, 3), in Cornelius (x, 3), Ananias (xxii, 12), in the choice of bishops and Christian workers (1 Tim. iii, 2; Titus i, 6-7).

Ananias and Sapphira, Simon Magus, the Corinthian adulterer (1 Cor. v, 1), and such men had no place in the early church or as missionary workers.

Would it not be well for the cause of Christ in India if we insisted upon the same standard, and if apostolic discipline had been enforced in the church in this land? He who hides a man's sin or places him in Christian work, when his evil reputation is known to all, is hindering the cause of Christ.

Personal thought. Paul and Barnabas apparently parted in anger, but it is comforting to see how God overruled their mistake. The Apostle Paul was humbled and grew later more loving and tender. Barnabas was thrown more upon God in his Christian work. Mark learnt a lesson, perhaps, from Paul's criticism, as well as from Barnabas' trust and later on became a more successful worker. Two countries were evangelized instead of one, and God accomplished His purpose in the end. Thus God overrules our mistakes when we seek to co-operate with Him.

The Gospel in Europe

ACTS xvi, 6-24

vv. 6-10. Study carefully this section. Notice the remarkable leading of God; the difficulty and doubt of the apostles; the deep emotion of the writer as he traces this strange and providential leading, which was forcing the apostle from Asia into Europe—from the East to the West; starting a tide of blessing, which continued for many centuries and evangelized and civilized the entire West; which, in turn, is now seeking to repay this priceless debt, by giving the Gospel again to the East.

Trace carefully upon the map the journey of the apostle and the following Roman provinces and districts: (1) passing through Syria and Cilicia, which constituted one Roman province, the missionaries come to (2) Derbe and Lystra, a region of the Roman Province of Galatia. (3) Phrygia is a region in South Galatia. (4) Intending to evangelize the Roman Province of Asia, and starting eastward for Ephesus, which is the chief city, the missionaries were turned northward, hoping to find an open door in the Roman Province of (5) Bithynia. Forbidden again, they turned eastward across (6) Mysia, where they did not preach, because it was part of the forbidden Province of Asia, (7) and came to the great harbour of Troas. Behind them is Asia, unevangelized, and before them is Europe and the Roman Province of Macedonia.

vv. 11-15. Trace Paul's journey upon the map and note the humble and apparently discouraging beginnings of the Gospel in Philippi, their first city in Europe, where they found neither synagogue nor prayer-house—only a little group of women, and one heart open to the Gospel. But to-day more than 300,000,000 confess Christ in Europe.

vv. 16-18. This Greek slave was probably a ventriloquist, supposed to be possessed by a demon; a fortune teller; one such as we find in many of the villages in India.

vv. 19-24. What were the motives of opposition to the Gospel in Philippi? Compare the motives and opposition in India to-day. Picture the discouraging outlook in v. 24!

Personal thought. *Come over and help us.* "That figure embodies the unconscious cry of weary humanity." As you think of the hundreds of millions in India who are unevangelized, who need just the Gospel that you have; as you think of the one million Christians in India who can evangelize this land if they will; as you think of the Christian Church whose greatest need is educated, consecrated leaders like Paul and Barnabas, will you also "straightway seek to go forth" to meet your country's need?

At Midnight in Prison

ACTS xvi, 25-40

v. 25. Recall the discouraging situation of xvi, 22-24, and note how the apostles acted in the face of such discouragement.

vv. 26-29. Picture the earthquake, which loosened the iron bar before the doors and the prisoners' bonds from the walls.

vv. 30-34. "What must I do to be saved?" If an earnest man were standing to confront you with this question, could you tell him clearly, step by step, how to proceed?

Have men superimposed upon the simple conditions here laid down other burdens and conditions which our Lord and the apostles did not require? (cp. John iii, 14-16).

What did the Pharisees wish to add to these conditions? (cp. xv, 1, 5). Notice that Paul's wounds had remained unwashed, and they were without food (vv. 33, 34). Study the change in the jailor and compare with modern conversions.

vv. 35-37. Was it the earthquake or the news of the apostle's Roman citizenship which changed the magistrates? "The illegal punishment of Roman citizens was a serious offence. If convicted, the magistrates would have been degraded and incapable, in future, of holding office" (Knowling).

If Paul and Barnabas had claimed their Roman citizenship, they had not been heard or heeded in the riot (v. 22).

They had been beaten (1) publicly, (2) untried, (3) as Roman citizens.

Notice Paul's brave demand for the sake of his converts and the future of Christianity in Philippi.

vv. 38-40. Picture this little community in the city of Philippi. If time permits, read hastily the first chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, to form a picture in your mind of this church which stood first in faith and love among all the Christian communities.

Personal thought. *At midnight they were praying and singing hymns.* Hungry, bleeding, with unwashed wounds, in painful stocks, with the magistrates and the whole city against them, in the dark hour of midnight, unable to sleep, these men prayed and sang, looking for the dawn.

When our dark hours of discouragement come, can we not show a like faith, and say with Paul, "I believe God"? (xxvii, 25).

In Thessalonica

ACTS xvii, 1-9

Travelling one hundred miles from Philippi along the great Egnation Roman road, the apostle reached Thessalonica, the metropolis of the Province of Macedonia, and a great shipping and commercial centre. Anything that happened in Thessalonica would soon be known in all that part of the world (cp. 1 Thes. i, 8).

vv. 1-3. Trace the apostle's journey upon the map. What was his "custom," or method of work, in every city? And what was his chief message? Probably he preached very much the same sermon as in Antioch (cp. xiii, 16).

How did the missionaries pay their expenses in Thessalonica? (cp. 1 Thes. ii, 9; 2 Thes. iii, 8).

v. 4. What three classes of persons constituted the new church? Which class was in the majority?

v. 5. Who were the enemies in this and in other cities and what steps did they take to get rid of the missionaries?

Is jealousy shown in opposition to the Gospel in India?

v. 6-8. Note the dangerous charge of rebellion and treason—the mere suspicion of which often cost a man his life under the empire.

v. 9. This was usual in Roman law. They were bound over to keep the peace and to prevent the cause of the disturbance (Paul) from coming to Thessalonica.

The apostle longed to return to them, but as long as the magistrates maintained this attitude, he said that "Satan hindered us" (1 Thes. ii, 18).

Thessalonica rose in importance as a Christian centre. Its bishops were represented in the great councils. It gave the Gospel to the wild Slaves and Bulgarians, converting them to the Christian faith. Even to-day Christians are found in the modern city of Salonica.

Personal thought. *There is another King, one Jesus!* Is the kingship of the invisible Jesus so real a fact in your life that those who associate with you note it? Is there a devotedness of service and a recognition of His will that emphasizes His kingship?

1 Thessalonians

Thessalonica, a great centre of trade, noted for the manufacture of goats' hair cloth, offered Paul the opportunity of supporting himself (cp. ii, 9; 2 Thes. iii, 8).

Being driven from the city on the dangerous charge of treason, and unable to return to this young Gentile church in the fire of persecution, he places before them the blessed hope of Christ's return.

The majority of the believers were Gentile converts, who "had turned unto God from idols" (i, 9), and as the apostle had preached the second coming and judgement to awaken the consciences of these Gentiles, they were so eagerly looking for Christ's return that some of them had begun to neglect their daily work (iv, 11). To encourage them until he is able to return, the apostle sends Timothy (iii, 2) and this first epistle.

Study this epistle as carefully as time permits to gain a picture of the church in this city. Take more than one day upon the lesson, if necessary.

Note these three divisions of the epistle :—

1. i, 2-6. The defence of himself against the attacks of his enemies and the summary of his life among them (cp. i, 5, 6, 8, 9; ii, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 16), where he refutes the charge of error, guile, etc.

2. ii, 17—iii, 13. The apostle's encouragement of the Thessalonians in persecution, and rejoicing over Timothy's good report. Note his expressions of affection.

3. iv, 1—v, 28. Exhortation to holiness, encouragement from Christ's coming, warnings against error.

Personal thought. *From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord in Macedonia and Achaia.* How far has the word of the Lord sounded forth from your life—from your Church—from your Association?

2 Thessalonians

Misunderstanding his first epistle, and thinking that Christ was immediately to appear, some were excited and still neglecting their daily work (cp. 2 Thes. iii, 10, 11).

The apostle had spoken of the certainty and suddenness of Christ's coming rather than of its immediacy. He writes this second epistle to show that a certain development of evil must precede Christ's return, and that they must watch, work, and be quiet. He reminds them that he had told them repeatedly in his teaching, while he was among them, that Christ was not immediately to appear (ii, 5).

Note the substance of the three chapters :—

1. Christ's certain coming, with reward and punishment, as an encouragement to endure persecution.
2. Warning against extreme views as to stating the date of Christ's coming—neglecting their work, etc.
3. Suggestions for the repression of disorder (v. 6) and idleness (v. 10). Practical exhortation.

What great lesson do you learn for your own life from the church of Thessalonica and from the two epistles which St. Paul wrote to it ?

Personal thought. "Eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might" (2 Thes. i, 9). The punishment of sin is to be shut away from the power and glory of Jesus, to be separated from the great achieving power of the universe, and to be eternally incapacitated for all real achievement. Thank God for the opportunity to achieve something to-day, before "the face of the Lord" and "the glory of His might."

In Berœa

ACTS xvii, 10-22

vv. 10-15. Berœa was fifty miles from Thessalonica. Paul had had to flee in the night in great danger.

In what way was his experience here unique in his missionary life? Contrast it with the persecution in other cities (xiii, 45; xvii, 5; xviii, 6).

What lesson do you learn for your own life from v. 11?

vv. 16-22. Read this section carefully and answer the following questions:—How was the Apostle affected by idolatry? (How are we?) What was his method of work? Among what classes did he preach? How and why did the Athenians misunderstand him? What was the character of his hearers?

Athens, "the mother of art and eloquence," centre of philosophy and learning, was the intellectual Mecca of the world, as well as the most religious city of the Roman empire.

The word *babbler* (v. 18) is a piece of street slang, caught from the lips of the Athenians, meaning a picker up of scraps of learning. The Council of the Areopagus had control over the lectures of the city in the interest of public morality and order. "In Athens Paul made himself like an Athenian and adopted the regular Socratic style of general free discussion in the Areopagus, as Socrates had done 400 years before him" (v. 17).

It was a capital offence to introduce "strange gods", if their own deities were thereby overthrown (v. 18).

How did Socrates suffer for this same offence?

Personal thought. *These were noble . . . examining the Scriptures daily.* Is the habit of daily devotional Bible study the most regular and important habit of your life? Do you daily search the Scriptures in order to fasten upon the mind certain great ideas and the teaching and personality of Jesus Christ, that these may mould and shape your character? Is your Bible study changing your daily life?

Paul at Athens

ACTS xvii, 22-34

Study most carefully this great example of Paul's preaching to Gentiles. If necessary, spend more than one day upon this lesson.

vv. 22-23. Note his tactful beginning. "I perceive that ye are uncommonly religious," or, "most respectful of that which is divine" (Gr.).

vv. 24-28. The Stoics believed in God as creator, as providence, as source of life. How far could they agree with the apostle's statements? How would these statements correct the impersonal pantheism of the Stoics, and the Epicurean notion that the gods lived far away in bliss, caring nothing for men?

vv. 29-31. Notice the apostle's bold appeal to the conscience and insistence of personal accountability to God, which their philosophies ignored.

Study carefully this entire address noting the similarity of conditions between ancient Athens and India to-day. Make an outline of it and ask yourself what lessons we may learn for our presenting the Gospel to non-Christians.

Among others, notice the following points:—

1. He begins where he finds them, as a Greek to Greeks.
2. He adapts the truth to his hearers (contrast with his sermons to Jews).
3. He welcomes truth, as *God's truth*, wherever he finds it, and builds upon all that he finds true in other religions.
4. He quotes from their own writers, but neither in the spirit of flattery nor of controversy.
5. He calls men to repentance, and appeals to the conscience.

vv. 32-34. What was the effect of his preaching, and how did it compare with the results in other cities? What was the cause of his failure? (cp xvii, 21).

Personal thought. As the Apostle Paul became all things to all men—to the Greeks as a Greek; to the Jews as a Jew—that he might save some, do we not need to learn the lesson of adapting our truth to our hearers; of speaking tactfully, generously, lovingly, and boldly to those who differ from us?

Note the similar conditions in Athens and India of popular polytheism, philosophical pantheism, holy places, temples, lack of personal accountability, elaborate ritual, and numerous idols.

Paul at Corinth

ACTS xviii, 1-10

Politically and commercially, the glory of Athens had departed. Corinth was now the chief city of Greece; the gateway between the East and the West; a centre of Roman and Greek and oriental influence; a vortex of luxury and licentiousness. Here was the Roman world in miniature. It was the hardest city the apostle had yet attempted. Coming from apparent failure at Athens, "in weakness and fear and much trembling", he determined to know nothing among them but Christ, and Him crucified (cp. 1 Cor. ii, 1-5).

vv. 1-4. What was Paul's manner of life in Corinth? How did he begin work, and what method did he follow? It was the Jewish custom that every boy should learn a trade at the age of twelve or thirteen. Jesus became a carpenter, Paul a weaver. Apply this to the need of industrial education in India to-day. Let us be proud to work with our hands. Let us honour the dignity of manual labour. India can only be made wealthy by work. Great empires are built up by sound work.

v. 5. Paul seems to have felt a peculiar burden for souls, and gave himself wholly to preaching at this time.

v. 6. What was the attitude of the Jews and Gentiles of Corinth? (cp. xiii, 46).

vv. 7-10. Note the fierce competition that must have arisen between Judaism and Christianity; the probable persecution and the need of encouragement which the apostle received in vv. 9, 10.

What lesson do you learn from this word of Christ as applied to your own life?

Note on the map that Corinth was a great commercial centre, midway between Rome and Ephesus. Its life was characterized by commercial greed, conceited culture, and gross sensuality.

Personal thought. *Be not afraid, but speak. I have much people in this city.* How many people had Christ in Corinth? In one sense, as many as were called into the church; In another sense, as many as there were people in the city.

I have much people in your village, in your college, in your district; therefore speak, for I am with thee.

Return to Antioch

ACTS xviii, 11-22

v. 12. Read vv. 11-17. Gallio, the new proconsul, was the brother of the great philosopher Seneca. The Jews, angered by Paul's success, hoped that Gallio would dispose of Paul at the beginning of his term of office. They accused Paul of introducing a new religion; thus placing him without the protection granted by the Roman government to the Jewish religion, and making him an introducer of an illegal mode of worship. Cross-questioning them, Gallio perceives their jealousy, and makes the momentous decision that Paul's teaching and Christianity are not illegal, permitting him freedom of speech. The crowd approves his decision, and falls to beating the Jewish leader Sosthenes.

This marks a crisis in the apostle's work, permitting him to found one of his largest churches, and giving him leisure under the protection of the Roman government, to write his first great epistle. Here, probably, were written 1 and 2 Thessalonians and, towards the end of his visit, the great Epistle to the Galatians (see the Chronological Table).

vv. 12-17. Read these verses and note Gallio's broad-minded approval of the Christian position, and its significance for Paul's future work. Corinth, as a Roman colony, would regard the Jews as they were regarded at Rome (cp. xviii, 2).

vv. 18-22. Trace Paul's homeward journey on the map, as he now ends his second missionary journey.

In v. 22 he goes from Cæsarea up to the church at Jerusalem, and then down to Antioch, ending his second great missionary journey. Why did Paul not remain longer at Ephesus in view of the great opportunity presented there?

Do you learn any lesson for your own life from this section?

Personal thought. *Paul took his leave of the brethren* (v. 18). His presence was no longer necessary in Corinth, and in every place the gospel had to stand or fall with the rank and file of Christians. It rested upon the priesthood of the laity, not primarily upon apostles, prophets and teachers. It stood or fell with the every-day life of the Christians in each community.

With you the gospel stands or falls to-day. Is your life a proof or a denial of the power of Christ?

Review—The Second Missionary Journey

Let us now review the events of the second great missionary journey. Refer to the Chronological Table, and note the dates, the places, and the epistles, which this journey embraces.

Trace out upon the map this journey of the Apostle Paul and fix in your mind what happened at each city, until you are familiar with the events of this great epoch-making journey.

The churches of Macedonia and Achaia were some of the largest and most flourishing of those founded in the apostle's history.

Note some of the great spiritual lessons which this journey teaches.

(1) Apostolic mistakes and failures are over-ruled for good (xv, 37-41).

(2) The apostolic choice of workers is for us an important lesson (xvi, 1-3).

(3) Apostolic guidance (xvi, 6-10). So God guides to-day.

(4) Apostolic personal work. Note that in Philippi no large audiences are referred to. Three individuals are mentioned—an Asiatic woman, a Greek slave and a Roman jailor. The gospel in Europe began with personal work, which is the greatest means of winning men to-day (xvi, 12-34).

(5) Apostolic courage (xvi, 25).

(6) Apostolic preaching (xvii, 22-31)

(7) Apostolic success (xviii, 1-11).

Follow out these lessons, or others, and apply them to your own life and to conditions in India.

Personal thought. At Athens and Corinth Paul stood alone against the proud philosophies and powerful polytheism of Greece; but to-day there remains not one worshipper of Diana, Apollo or Mars, while the Christians of the Greek Church number nearly 100,000,000 !

So will it be in India when our work is done. "He must reign."

1 Corinthians

Even though you have studied this epistle before, read parts of it rapidly again in order to form a vivid picture of the Christian community in Corinth.

Paul wrote this epistle from Ephesus (xix, 10) in the midst of his busy campaign there, about A.D. 55 (see the Chronological Table).

He had written a previous letter to them, which was lost (v. 9), and had received a reply from them containing many questions (vii, 1).

He had recently received alarming news of the state of the church at Corinth (i, 11; xvi, 15-17).

Spend as much time as you think profitable upon this epistle in order to gain an idea of the church at Corinth.

Note the substance of the chapters, which show the condition of the church there.

- i. Divisions (vv. 1, 10, 26).
- ii. Paul's method and manner of life in Corinth (vv. 1-3).
- iii. Jealousy and strife—Paul, Apollos, Cephas (vv. 4, 22).
- iv. Paul's apostleship attacked—and defended (vv. 10-13).
- v. Impurity.
- vi. Lawsuits.
- vii. The position of woman.
- viii. Things sacrificed to idols.
- ix. Paul's apostleship challenged.
- x. Idolatry (v. 14).
- xi. The Lord's Supper (17-34).
- xii. Spiritual gifts.
- xiii. Love.
- xiv. Tongues and disorder.
- xv. The resurrection.
- xvi. Church collections.

Personal thought. *Called to be saints* (1 Cor. i, 2). How sublime is the apostle's faith; though recognizing the degraded condition of this community, containing divisions, fornication, drunkenness and other sins, yet remembering that God is able to save and sanctify such as these, he teaches of love, of the fulness of the Spirit and the life of holiness. We too are called to be saints. So are the Christians of India.

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians was probably written in the year A.D. 56 from Macedonia—probably from Philippi (cp. Acts xx, 1; see the Chronological Table). Titus had been sent to Corinth, and Paul had arranged to meet him at Troas. When he did not come, Paul became anxious, fearing that he had written too severely to the Corinthians (vii, 8). "His anxiety became so great that he could not do his work in Troas, but hurried into Macedonia" (ii, 12, 13). Here he was reassured by the good news which Titus brought, that his letter had been heeded (vii, 5-7, 13-15). The offender of 1 Cor. v had been disciplined and had repented (vii, 11, 12; ii, 5-11). Upon Titus's return, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. Chapters i-ix show that the church, as a whole, was reconciled to the Apostle Paul.

Chapters x-xiii speak in severe terms again, but the author is probably addressing the unreconciled Jewish minority, who still would not obey Paul.

Study in this epistle the sufferings of the Apostle Paul. This is the great epistle of suffering in the New Testament, and throws more light than any other upon his afflictions during his missionary work. It contains three long catalogues of the afflictions which he endured.

(1) i, 4-9. His narrow escape from death while in Ephesus, not recorded in the Acts.

(2) iv, 7-12. As earthen vessels.

(3) vi, 4-10. Note the catalogue of sufferings.

(4) xi, 22-28. Note the list of eight kinds of outward sufferings or persecutions; eight perils, and eight kinds of inward suffering.

(5) xii, 7-11. The lesson of suffering—*My grace is sufficient for thee*. God's power perfected in our weakness.

If time permits, read the epistle rapidly to study the condition of the Corinthian Church.

Personal thought. *My grace is sufficient for thee*. In joy or sorrow; in strength or weakness; in pleasure or pain; in the light or in the dark; in success or in failure; in any condition and under all circumstances *my grace is sufficient for thee*.

The Third Missionary Journey

ACTS xviii, 23—xix, 7

v. 23. Trace on the map the apostle's journey from Antioch up over Mount Taurus through Cilician Gates, through Phrygia and South Galatia and over the mountains north of Laodicea down to Ephesus. Ephesus was one of the chief cities of the east. As the capital of the large and wealthy Roman province of Asia, it was the key to all Asia Minor. It contained the great temple of Diana, and, like Benares or Madura, it was a place of pilgrimage and centre of magical arts. Here for three years the apostle carries on a vigorous campaign in the city and the province of Asia. Ephesus lies to-day in ruins, but the word of God abideth for ever.

vv. 24-28. Study carefully Apollos of Alexandria. How much did he know of Christ, and what did he lack?

xix, vv. 1-7. Study carefully the character of these half-taught disciples. How much did they know, and what did they lack?

v. 2. What answer would you make to this question? How would it be answered by many of the Christians in India to-day?

vv. 3-4. John's baptism of repentance was a preparation for the coming Messiah. Christian baptism was the "confession of faith in a present Saviour, who gives the gift of the Spirit."

Note that this instance of receiving the Spirit is the seventh time that the Spirit was given. If possible, study these seven instances, noting when, how and with what results the Holy Spirit was given. (1) Jesus, anointed Christ, Luke iii, 21; John xx, 22. (2) The apostles, Acts ii, 1. (3) The disciples, Acts iv, 31. (4) The Samaritans, viii, 17. (5) Paul, ix, 17. (6) The Gentiles, x, 44. (7) The Ephesian disciples, xix, 2-6.

Personal thought. *Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?* For the seventh and last time in the book of the Acts we have to face this great question. Let us not pass it lightly by. The Spirit has been given. Pentecost is a dispensation, not a day. "All things are now ready."

In view of the evidence of the Acts of the Apostles of the results of the fulness of the Spirit, and in view of the need of my own life, shall I not accept God's gift to-day and yield my life now and for ever to the continued possession and control of the Holy Spirit?

Paul in Ephesus

ACTS xix, 8-22

Note the three classes among whom the apostle works in the order of their relative importance: with Christians (xix, 1); with Jews (xix, 8); with Gentiles (xix, 9). Remember they were still in Ephesus, where Paul spent three years (xx, 31). With Antioch in Syria, and Alexandria in Egypt, it ranked as one of the three great cities of the East.

vv. 8-9. How do the method and results of Paul's work in Ephesus compare with other cities where he had been?

The school of Tyrannus was probably a lecture hall, such as was commonly used by philosophers or rhetoricians. The apostle used this hall after hours. He was busy at his tent-making from before dawn till 11 a.m., which was the official hour for closing (xx, 34). After business hours, from 11 a.m., he would begin his preaching in this lecture hall, doubtless being taken at first for one of the travelling Sophists so common in that day.

v. 10. Paul always reached the cities as a base of operation for each province.

Find on the map the three churches of the Lycus Valley, founded at this time—Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colossae. Find also the seven churches mentioned in the Revelation, which were established during this period (cp. Rev. ii, 1, 8, 12, 18; iii, 1, 7, 14, 20).

vv. 11-20. What special evidences have we here of the power of the gospel and of the success of Paul's preaching (cp. 1 Cor. xiv, 8, 9).

vv. 21-22. Notice the reach of the apostle's large plans and statesmanlike purpose.

Personal thought. *All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word* (v. 10). It was so wherever the apostle went. His own missionary spirit was catching. He writes to Timothy, "Stir into flame the gift of God which is in thee." His enthusiasm spread to all about him. He set every man to work. Within three years this vast province was largely evangelized, from an insignificant beginning with twelve men, because one man was on fire.

All in India will hear the word if we are on fire.

The Riot in Ephesus

ACTS xix, 23-41

vv. 24-28. Study this vivid narrative. Picture this scene of a caste meeting of silversmiths in Ephesus. Note their testimony to Paul's widespread success in that vast province. To what two motives does the headman appeal in vv. 25-27? Do these motives operate to-day in India? Remember the people's pride in their great temple. "The sun, it was said, saw nothing in his course more magnificent than Diana's Temple." The festivals were thronged by pilgrims and devotees—thus enriching the city. Contrast the extent of the worship of Diana then and now, "all Asia and the world."

v. 28. For two hours the people invoked the goddess, crying "Great Diana," which was a stock-phrase or mantram in their worship.

Compare the "vain repetitions" of other religions in the past and in the present (cp. 1 Kings xviii, 26).

vv. 29-34. Note this vivid picture of the scene in the theatre. Its ruins to-day show that it was capable of holding 24,000 people.

Note Paul's bravery (v. 30) and the Jews' alarm, lest the mob turn against them (v. 33).

The chief officers (v. 31) were officials appointed to further the Roman policy of fostering the worship of the Roman gods and emperors. These verses seem to indicate that the upper classes in Ephesus were not opposed to the gospel as was the superstitious mob.

vv. 35-41. Study carefully this tactful speech of the town clerk.

Though the province was under a Roman governor, Ephesus retained municipal self-government. The town clerk was their own magistrate chosen by the people. To what motives does he skilfully appeal?

Personal thought. *A great door is opened unto me and there are many adversaries* (1 Cor. xvi, 9). The Apostle Paul is always moved by a great opportunity. He was ever looking for an open door. In Ephesus he found it and won the province. Opposition only called out his courage, and drove him to prayer.

What doors of opportunity are open before your life to-day?

In Europe Again

ACTS xx, 1-6

v. 1. The apostle was apparently in far greater danger than Luke indicates. He nearly lost his life in Ephesus, and it told upon his health (cp. 2 Cor. i, 8-10).

v. 2. What churches would the apostle re-visit in Macedonia? From his epistles to these churches, what do you gather would be the substance of his "exhortation"?

Note carefully that from Macedonia, probably from Philippi, the Apostle Paul wrote his great epistle of 2 Corinthians in A.D. 56 (Acts xx, 1), and from Corinth in Greece his great letter to the Romans in A.D. 57 (v. 2). Does Luke show any knowledge of these epistles or of their importance? (see Chronological Table).

v. 3. It would have been easy for the Jews to murder the apostle on shipboard, as they journeyed up to the Passover. At the last moment the plot was discovered, word is sent to the Asian delegates announcing his change of plan as he goes overland to meet them at Troas. Follow his route upon the map.

v. 4. What churches in Asia and Europe would be represented in this collection? Picture the journey of this growing company.

vv. 5-6. What had been the apostle's previous relation to Troas, and why had he been able to do so little there? (cp. Cor. ii, 12-14).

For the remaining portion of the short lesson and, if desirable, for several successive days, spend time in rapidly reading parts of the Epistle to the Romans, which was written at this time.

Read especially Rom. i, 8-17, noting the apostle's purpose in writing the letter: (1) to introduce himself to them and to prepare for his coming visit; (2) to warn them against the Judaizers who had already entered Galatia; (3) to expound the great doctrine of justification by faith, which was sorely needed in the Roman Church.

Personal thought. Think of the significance of these unmentioned letters written on papyrus. How little Luke realized their eternal significance. How little Paul himself knew that he was writing Scripture. How little we know of the significance and far-reaching effect of each day's life. "Now is the nick of time in matters that reach into eternity."

The Journey to Jerusalem

ACTS xx, 7-16

Note the significance of this journey to carry the Pauline collection for the saints and the importance the apostle attached to it in his daring to visit Jerusalem during the great feast, in spite of reiterated warnings of certain danger. Why did Paul consider the significance of this collection to be so great?

v. 7. Picture to yourself this early church and its institutions. Note that they are already meeting upon the first day of the week (cp. 1 Cor. xvi, 2), which has been set apart as a day of public worship for "the breaking of bread" and receiving of collections.

Notice also this beautiful picture of the apostle's care for his converts. What would be the nature of his teaching throughout this long night, judged by the great epistles which he had just written? Note that the "we," indicating the presence of Luke, who joined the party at Philippi, is resumed here, vv. 5-16, and continues in ch. xxi.

He had left the Apostle Paul at Philippi, where previously he had used the pronoun "we" in xvi, 10-17. What does this suggest of Luke's residence and occupation in the meantime?

vv. 8-12. What evidence do you find throughout this narrative of the writing of an eye-witness? Luke, apparently as a physician, vouches for the fact that the young man was dead. Was he an eye-witness of his recovery? (v. 13).

v. 11. The breaking of bread was either the "agape" (a common meal conceived as a sacrament), or more probably it was the Lord's Supper. Picture to yourself the little company under Paul's direction till break of day (cp. 1 Cor. xi, 23-34).

vv. 13-16. Trace carefully the course of Paul's voyage upon the map. Note that he takes a short cut in order to gain a few hours more with the disciples, "we going before."

Personal thought. *Until midnight . . . even till break of day* (7, 11). Pausing only to partake of that precious meal with the disciples, he pours out his heart throughout the long night as our Lord did his last night with his disciples. How full his heart was! How much he had to give to men! What a blessing he was to every church and to every individual he met!

My life is my message. What does it say?

Address to the Ephesian Elders

ACTS xx, 17-27

vv. 17-18. Landing at Miletus the Apostle Paul would engage a messenger who, sailing across the gulf and taking the coast road to Ephesus, would reach there in the night and summon the presbyters. The next day would be consumed in their journey to Miletus, and on the third day the apostle delivered this memorable farewell address. On the first journey we have a typical sermon of his to the Jews (xiii, 16-41). On the second journey his great sermon to the Gentiles at Athens (xvii, 22-31). And on this third journey we have this typical address to Christians.

Note how utterly different the three are in character.

Observe that this was his farewell message to Asia, which he would never see again ; it shows his own personal example and vindicates his methods—for he was being accused by the Judaizers in every city of insincerity, embezzlement, false teaching, and other charges (cp. 1 Thes. ii, 3-5 ; Gal. i, 10 ; 2 Cor. x, 10).

It is also a charge to these elders to fulfil their ministry.

vv. 18-19. In what three respects does the apostle stand before us as a model Christian worker in his own personal life ? (cp. 1 Thes. ii, 10).

vv. 20-21. In what respects is the apostle a model for us in his teaching ? Where, to whom, and what did he teach ?

vv. 23-27. What three characteristics of his ministry make the apostle an example to us ?

What does it mean to be pure from the blood of all men ? (cp. Ezek. iii, 17-20).

Personal thought. *I am pure from the blood of all men.* He was pure for he had preached the full gospel to all men. He had been silent before none, had hid nothing from them.

I also am responsible ; I have received the gospel as a great trust. It is a talent not to be hid, but to be used for Christ.

" I am a debtor " to give to others all that I have received.

Address to the Ephesian Elders (*Contd.*)

ACTS xx, 28-38

v. 28. To whom were they responsible, and what were the functions which elders or bishops had to exercise ?

vv. 29-30. The "grievous wolves" were the Judaizers, who had already worked havoc in Galatia and elsewhere. Was the apostle's prediction fulfilled? (cp. 2 Tim. i, 15; Rev. ii, 5).

v. 31. In what three respects is the Apostle Paul a model personal worker ?

v. 32. The "word of God" here is doubtless the gospel. What is it able to do for men? What can it do for you?

vv. 33-35. In what respects is the Apostle Paul a model for us in money matters ?

"These hands." He shows his hands, hard with toil, as an evidence of manual labour. Strength of character, individual worth and national prosperity are largely based upon honest toil. What lesson has India to learn from the Apostle Paul in the matter of manual labour ?

What do you consider the three chief causes of India's poverty to-day ?

The Apostle Paul had not coveted money; was not ashamed to work; was glad to give. He was ashamed to borrow. He taught that we should "owe no man anything" (Rom. xiii, 8). Why is debt wrong? Is it a cause of poverty in India to-day? What should be my attitude to debt ?

vv. 36-38. Picture this touching scene at parting; "tearing ourselves away" with clinging affection (xxi, 1).

Personal thought. *These hands have laboured.* The Apostle Paul was not ashamed of work, but gloried in it. Born as a Roman citizen, he had suffered the loss of all things, and though he might easily have lived upon others he toiled night and day, working as a weaver in city after city.

Have we not need as a nation to learn the great lesson of industrial education, and as individuals to learn the worth of honest work, and to glory in it? As true patriots we have need to toil like the apostle and to uplift our people by earnest work. Character is made and expressed by work.

The Journey to Jerusalem

ACTS xxi, 1-15

vv. 1-2. Follow the ship's course on the map. "He sailed in the finest season, by the brightest coasts and in the fairest weather" between Passover and Pentecost (Conybeare and Howson).

v. 3. As they came in sight of Cyprus, what old friend would the apostle remember lovingly as he leaned over the rail, and what memories would it call up of his former work and fellowship?

When had Tyre heard the gospel? (cp. Matt. xv, 21; Acts xi, 19).

vv. 4-6. Why was Paul in special danger in Jerusalem at this time? Note the loving parting, but not with old friends as in xx, 26, 27.

vv. 7-9. From Ptolemais, the modern Acre, Paul comes to Cæsarea, lodging with one of the deacons who had fled from his own persecution (viii, 4, 5).

Note that from xxi, 1-19 Luke uses the "we" again, showing that he is in the company. Do you suppose he heard from Philip, at this time, the events of chapters vi-viii? What was Philip's character and his influence in his own home?

vv. 10-14. Agabus comes bringing the news from Jerusalem of the growing hatred of Paul and perhaps of plots to kill him (xx, 3).

What three classes tried to dissuade the apostle from going to Jerusalem, and for what reasons?

What one motive constrained him to go against all human advice? (14). Compare this last journey of the Apostle Paul to Jerusalem with that of our Lord Himself (cp. Luke ix, 51; Acts xx, 23; xxi, 4, 13).

v. 15. In A.D. 57 Paul arrives in Jerusalem for the fifth and last time, thus ending the third great missionary journey (see Chronological Table).

Personal thought. *I am ready to die—for the Lord Jesus.* To the apostle, life and death were but incidents in doing the will of God. To live, was Christ; to die, was gain. Death was a conquered foe—the portal which led into fuller life.

Is Christ so real to you here that death to you is robbed of all fear—only the door that leads to His presence?

What have we to fear in death if Christ is on the other side?

Review the Third Missionary Journey

Look back over this great third missionary journey, tracing the apostle's course from Antioch (xviii, 22) to Jerusalem (xxi, 15).

Familiarize yourself with the events of the journey, so that you can recall from memory what happened at each place.

In this and in previous journeys, what do you learn of Paul's methods? Let us note some of the lessons of

Apostolic Service

- (1) He planned for large things with statesmanlike forethought (xix, 21).
- (2) He kindled the missionary spirit wherever he went (xix, 10).
- He developed indigenous leadership. He set men to work (xvi, 1 ; xx, 4).
- (4) He trusted men and worked with them as brethren.
- (5) He despaired of no situation and of no man (xvi, 25 ; 1 Cor. xvi, 19).
- (6) He set for himself, and his converts, the highest standard of life (1 Thes. ii, 10).
- (7) He began, continued, and ended in the Holy Spirit (xix, 2).

Personal thought. *I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus* (xx, 24).

The Apostle Paul was working in the plan of God. He was ambitious to please Christ. All life for him was simplified to a single motive. What is my ambition in life?

In Jerusalem

ACTS xxi, 16-26

vv. 16-18. Picture this memorable meeting of the apostle with James, the Lord's brother, the elders and the brethren.

He had come to present the offering of the Gentile churches, so patiently collected, and to unite the Jewish and Gentile factions of the church. It was a critical moment.

vv. 19-20. The situation was both delicate and difficult. Notice the picture of the Jerusalem Church, which had "still remained within the frame-work of Judaism, and consequently its doctrinal development had been arrested."

Why was it hard for Jews and Gentiles to unite? Compare the situation with conditions in India.

Notice several points—"(1) They acknowledge the hand of God in the mission to the Gentiles. (2) They acknowledged Paul as a 'brother'. (3) They endorsed their former decision concerning Gentile believers (v. 25). (4) They joined Paul in his efforts to promote unity."

v. 21. How was Paul misrepresented? (As Christ and Stephen had also been before him). What was Paul's real attitude toward the law?

vv. 22-26. The leaders propose that he show, by an act of loyalty to the law, that the accusations against him were false. Four Jewish Christians had taken upon them the vows of the Nazarite (cp. Num. vi, 3). Josephus informs us that it was a meritorious act to defray the expenses of the sacrifices for poor Nazarites, as King Agrippa had done at Jerusalem. "Be at charges," *i.e.*, pay the expenses.

Did Paul himself keep the Mosaic law when among Gentiles? (1 Cor. ix, 20). He did not regard circumcision or the law as necessary to salvation. It was but a temporary provision, ultimately to be abandoned.

He was willing when among Jews to observe the ceremonial law, if it was not made an essential nor imposed upon Gentiles? What principle lay at the bottom of all his actions, enabling him to be as a Jew to the Jews; a Greek to the Greeks; a Roman to the Romans? (Gal. vi, 15; iv, 1-10).

Personal thought. *God had wrought . . . by his ministry.* Here was a man wholly yielded to God. God was working in and through him. God is working to-day. His greatest need is men. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth" in search of men.

What kind of men does God want?

The Riot and Arrest

ACTS xxi, 27-40

vv. 27-28. The Jews from Ephesus and elsewhere recognized Paul and tried to incite a riot, as they had in other cities (cp. xix, 29). Note the charges of traitor, apostate and profaner of the temple. Compare them with the charges which Saul and others had raised against Stephen (vi, 13, 14).

Between the inner court of the temple, which was open to Jews only, and the lower platform, called the Court of the Gentiles, there stood a railing with a notice, prohibiting the entrance of Gentiles on pain of death.

vv. 29-33. Do you think this riot was the result of sudden impulse or a concerted plan? (v. 39). They attempted to drag Paul outside the sacred precincts that they might not pollute the temple with his blood, the doors being closed by the Levitical guard to prevent further pollution of the sacred place. The Tower of Antonia adjoined and overlooked the temple. It was commanded by a Roman military tribune with 760 infantry and 240 cavalry (cp. xxiii, 23). Such riots were common among the patriotic Jews who hated the Romans.

vv. 34-36. Picture this mob and Paul chained between two soldiers standing upon the outside stairway, eagerly and boldly seeking this first opportunity to witness to his own people (cp. John xix, 15).

vv. 37-40. What light do these verses throw upon Paul's adaptability and upon his character?

The Egyptian referred to was probably a false prophet whom Josephus describes, who led some 30,000 people to the Mount of Olives to see the walls of the city fall down. Felix, the governor, dispersed them, but the Egyptian escaped.

Think of the spirit in which he would address the people, as he saw in these zealous Jews his former self.

Personal thought. "I am become all things to all men that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. ix, 20-23).

In this scene the Apostle Paul appears as a Roman citizen (xxii, 27), a Greek scholar (xxi, 37), a Hebrew religionist (xxi, 40), a bond slave of Jesus (xxii, 14). We too are placed in contact with men of many religions, of many castes and races. Can we not learn to sympathetically understand the point of view of each, and to present Christ as the fulfilment of the aspirations of all, that we may by all means save some?

Paul's Defence

ACTS xxii, 1-16

vv. 1-2. Remember that the apostle bound with two chains stands between two Roman soldiers. Picture the raging mob below seeking his life.

He addresses them in Aramaic, the Hebrew dialect of the people in which our Lord had spoken.

vv. 3-5. Study these verses in which Paul describes his relations with Judaism. What is his argument in these verses and who are his witnesses?

vv. 6-11. Having shown that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews, loyal to the inner heart of Judaism, he now shows how he was converted by the revelation of the risen Christ. Compare carefully this section with St. Luke's account in Acts ix, 1-17.

What great lesson may we learn from this account of the most remarkable conversion recorded in history?

Note Paul's emphasis on the objective reality of the vision. It was at noon, not at night, others beheld the light, he himself was stricken blind, etc.

vv. 12-16. Note the apostle's tactful emphasis on all circumstances which might conciliate the Jews, and how he withholds till the last, the detested word of v. 21 (cp. 3-5, 12, 14, 17).

Note this fuller statement of Ananias.

What lesson does it contain for your own life?

Personal thought. I, too, am appointed by God himself to *know*, to *see*, to *hear*, to *witness*. It is my privilege to know God's will, to see the living Christ by faith, to hear His voice in my daily life, to witness for Him by word and character.

God has a plan for my life, and a place for me in the great campaign of winning the world for Christ.

May I, like Paul, be found faithful!

Paul's Defence (Contd.)

ACTS xxii, 17-29

vv. 17-21. Study carefully this condensed closing statement of his last defence in Jerusalem. What is Paul's thought, and what do you learn from it?

Summarize now the argument of the apostle in vv. 3-5, 6-16, 17-21. Note his wonderful tact and generosity. He addresses them in their own language; he speaks to them, not as enemies but as an orderly company of friends (v. 1). He finds something to praise, even in their mad desire to kill him (v. 3). He avoids needless repetition of the offensive words "Jesus," the "Christ," and the "Gentiles," yet he is fearless and bold in witnessing to the truth of his conversion to Christ and God's purpose for the Gentiles.

vv. 22-23. Note the fury of the mob. What was it that especially angered them with Paul in his address? (v. 4).

He was to be "examined", *i.e.*, flogged till he should confess what he had done.

vv. 25-29. Paul's father or grandfather may have obtained Roman citizenship by distinguished service to the State, or his family may have been planted in Tarsus with a Jewish colony, having the rights of citizenship, by the Seleucid kings. This would place him among the aristocracy, in a family of distinction and of at least moderate wealth. He had suffered the loss of all things by his conversion, as a convert often does to-day in India (Phil. iii, 8). As a citizen, he could not be beaten nor killed; he had the right of appeal to the emperor himself.

Personal thought. "*I am an Indian born*" (v. 28). True patriotism carries with it both satisfaction and obligation. Proud of our ancient civilization, of the religious genius of our people, of a land with a great past and a greater future—yet as a patriot, mindful also of my obligation to my country; mindful of her great need—a need religious, social, intellectual, material, I am a debtor to my people. I, too, am willing to suffer that they may achieve their great destiny.

Paul before the Sanhedrim

ACTS xxiii, 1-10

vv. 22-30. Picture to yourself this august assembly, which we now see for the last time in the Book of Acts. Recall the former scenes as our Lord, Stephen, Peter and the apostles had, in turn, stood before it to be judged.

vv. 2-3. Why was the high priest angered? Does Paul's reply indicate that he had lost his temper? Compare his attitude with that of Christ under the same circumstances in his trial, and also in his words to the Pharisees.

The Jews whitened the walls of their sepulchres (Matt. xxiii, 27). Paul's prophecy was strikingly fulfilled, for Ananias perished miserably ten years later at the hands of an assassin.

vv. 4-5. Note Paul's humble apology, What is the force of Paul's quotation, and what was the ruling principle of his life in his attitude toward constituted government, whether Roman or Jewish? (see Rom. xiii, 1-7).

As you recall Christ's attitude toward the foreign government of Rome (Matt. xxii, 21) and Paul's attitude toward Rome, can you formulate any principle as to our relation to government under modern conditions in India?

vv. 6-10. Note how Paul grasps the situation and adapts himself to it in dividing the Sanhedrim against themselves.

Personal thought. *Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people.* Are you developing the quality so uncommon in our day of reverence for regularly constituted authority. Reverence is an essential element in Christian character. In our Lord's time, the Jews hated the ruling Romans, yet Christ said, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." In Paul's time, the Jews yet more bitterly hated the Romans, but the apostle maintains "the powers that be are ordained of God," and by maintaining his loyalty to the government, rendered an incalculable service to the future of Christianity. God is overruling all. Can we not best serve the future by being loyal in the present?

To Cæsarea

ACTS xxiii, 11-25

v. 11. Study carefully this important verse. Of what was Jerusalem the centre, and of what was Rome? What need had Paul of cheer at this time?

Think also of the encouragement of this vision. No one had been converted in Jerusalem, but Christ's purpose had been fulfilled. Note the other occasions on which St. Paul had received similar encouragement (Acts xviii, 9, 22, 18; xxvii, 23).

Note also that this word of Christ, "be of good cheer," was a favourite expression of His on earth, and that it covers all possible sources of human discouragement and pessimism (see Matt. ix, 2, 22; xiv, 27; John xvi, 33). Good cheer for the past, present and future.

vv. 12-15. How many times had the apostle escaped with his life from similar plots? The curse, if unfulfilled, remained upon the conspirators; thus, as with Christ Himself, the Jews brought upon themselves God's curse (cp. Matt. xxvii, 25; 1 Thes. ii, 15, 16).

What does v. 15 indicate of the condition of the Sanhedrim at this time, and how has the after history of the Jews been the result of their attitude to Christianity?

vv. 16-22. Paul evidently had relatives in Jerusalem and elsewhere (Rom. xvi, 7).

vv. 23-25. Note the size and importance of Paul's guard. Why was Paul the most hated man in Jerusalem, and the greatest enemy of the Jews?

Personal thought. *The Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer."* Seen or unseen He stands by me, speaking words of cheer. He is concerned in my life. He has a plan for my work. His interests are mine; and mine are His.

Against the past of sin, he is able to say, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." In darkness of present doubt, He cries, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." Against the dread of the future, He says, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Paul before Felix

ACTS xxiii, 26—xxiv, 9

vv. 26-30. Note how eagerly St. Luke records another Roman testimony to the apostle's innocence. Was the chief captain's letter a strictly accurate account, or is there in it a touch of self-interest? (v. 27).

"The amount of space assigned to Paul's imprisonment and successive examinations marks this as a most important part of the book in the author's estimation" (Ramsay). What was its importance to Luke?

Felix was a former slave of Antonia, the mother of the Emperor Claudius. He lived a life of license and excess. About A.D. 51, he became procurator of Judæa, with a short and vicious administration. Tacitus says, "In the practice of all kinds of lust and cruelty, he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave." How do we find these traits coming out in his dealings with Paul?

vv. 31-35. What friends had the Apostle Paul in Cæsarea, and when did he last visit the place? (cp. Acts x, 1; xxi, 8).

xxiv. 1-4. Note the importance of the deputation against the apostle. Tertullus was a professional advocate or *vakil*. Note his expressions of fulsome flattery to gain the favour of Felix.

vv. 5-9. On what three serious charges does he claim the apostle guilty? Wherever Paul went riots occurred. What unique position did St. Paul occupy in relation to the Jews, to the Romans, to the Christians?

Personal thought. Contrast the characters that here stand before us—a Roman officer, a corrupt governor, a proud high priest, an eloquent advocate, and a humble prisoner. Of none of the former would we have heard save for their relation to this servant of Christ. A man's destiny is determined by his relation to Christ. Time reverses human values. Human glory fades as a flower of the field, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Does your life stand in such relation to Jesus Christ that it will have eternal significance?

Paul's Defence

ACTS xxiv, 10-27

vv. 10-13. Why would Felix's long experience be favourable to Paul? (vv. 10-22). Recall the three charges of treason, heresy and sacrilege made by the prosecution in vv. 5, 6. Note Paul's argument in answering each of these charges.

vv. 14-16. Note the apostle's defence of Christianity and his answer to the charge of heresy. Paul shows that Christ is the fulfilment and goal of Judaism. How is Christ the fulfilment of Hinduism and of the truth in all other religions?

v. 16. George Müller, when asked, on his ninety-second birthday, what was the secret of his success and of his wonderful faith, said, "I have tried to keep a conscience void of offence; and I have been a lover of God's word." Are these two things true of me? (Rom. ix, 1; 2 Tim. i, 3).

vv. 17-18. How does Paul answer the charge of sacrilege?

vv. 19-21. A Roman had the right to face his accusers.

Sum up now Paul's argument, and note the strong points in his case from a legal point of view.

vv. 22-26. Notice this crisis in the life of Felix.

How would Paul appeal, under these three heads, to this "Roman libertine and profligate Jewish princess," who had deserted her former husband?

Note the psychological danger of delay and result of conviction disobeyed. Always "seize the first opportunity to act on every good resolution you have formed."

Under no circumstances could a Roman receive a bribe. What should be a Christian's attitude to bribery in India to-day?

v. 27. Imagine how Paul would pass these two years in meditation, prayer and service (cp. xxvi, 22; xxviii, 30, 31).

Study the character of Felix, his opportunity and his end.

Personal thought. *A conscience void of offence.* Paul sat in turn to be judged before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, before the Sanhedrim and Cæsar. But he ever stood daily before an inward tribunal, from which he could only appeal to the judgment-seat of Christ (2 Cor., vv. 9-10). So may we judge ourselves before the bar of conscience, that we may stand before Him well-pleasing at the last day.

Paul before Festus

ACTS xxv, 1-12

Festus was a better man than Felix. According to Josephus his administration showed both vigour and justice, though he died after a short term of office. Note how these characteristics appear in this chapter and contrast him with Felix.

The coming of Festus is a point of departure for all systems of chronology. Ramsay and Lightfoot place it in the year A.D. 59 or 60, while McGiffert and Harnack place it as early as A.D. 55 or 56, hence the difference in the various systems of chronology (see Chronological Table).

Note the persistence of Jewish hate which pursues Paul after two years of imprisonment. What three charges do they make as judged by the apostle's threefold defence?

vv. 9-12. Why did Paul refuse trial in Jerusalem? Why did he object to being tried by Festus, and with what object does he appeal for trial before the emperor?

Note his indignation at the compromise of Festus after two years of delay before the bribe-taking Felix.

Notice the perplexity of Festus; "to condemn seemed unjust, to acquit inexpedient," he, therefore, proposes a compromise.

The apostle despaired of justice at the hands of the Sanhedrim, who were seeking to kill him, as they had killed his Master. He was indignant at the cupidity of Felix and the compromise of Festus. Christianity, itself, in the person of its representative, was to be tried at the highest tribunal of the empire.

Compare the compromise of Festus with that of Pilate (v. 9).

Personal thought. Am I seeking to please men—or God? (v. 9; Gal. i, 10). Pilate, Felix and Festus had all sacrificed their conscience for the favour of men. In the last analysis, we must either live for the favour of God or else of men.

As Christ stood before Pilate, and Paul before Festus, we stand on trial before the world. Are we swayed by the praises or blame of men; or, like our Master and His great apostle, do we stand before God alone?

Agrippa and Festus

ACTS xxv, 13-27

vv. 13-16. Agrippa II and Bernice—brother and sister—were the children of Herod Agrippa I, who had killed James (Acts xii, 1). Brought up in the court of Claudius, a Jew by birth, a Roman in sympathies, he finally sided with Rome against the Jews in the war which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem. Acquainted with Judaism, but Roman in his tastes, he was just the person to whom Festus would appeal upon his arrival. He had evidently come to pay a visit of respect to the new governor.

His relation to the Roman procurator would be much the same as that of an Indian rajah to the British resident in a native state.

v. 16. Every Roman had a right to face his accusers (cp. xxiii, 30 ; xxiv, 19 ; xxv, 5).

vv. 17-22. Note the repetition of what had already been stated (vv. 1-12) in order to emphasize Paul's innocence in the eyes of the Roman governor, Festus. What was Festus' estimate of Paul's character and of his case ? What misconception did he entertain with regard to Christ ?

How is Christ misconceived to-day in India ?

v. 22. *To-morrow . . . thou shalt hear him.* Agrippa was unconsciously drawing near the supreme opportunity of his life. On that day he was to hear the testimony of a man who had seen Jesus in His glory, and was to be made the object of a direct appeal. May no great opportunity pass us thus unrecognized and unused.

vv. 23-27. Note the character of Paul's audiences (cp. xxiv, 24) and how they fulfilled Christ's prophecy of the three classes to whom he was to witness (cp. ix, 15).

What were the motives of Festus for re-examining Paul ?

Personal thought. *One Jesus, whom Paul affirmed to be alive* (v. 19). Jesus, to Festus, was a dead man ; to Paul, a living Saviour. To Festus He was an unknown historic character ; to Paul, a personal friend. What is Christ to you ? On what grounds could you affirm Him to be alive ?

Like Festus, would you have "no certain thing" to say concerning Him (v. 26), or like Paul, could you say, "*I know whom I have believed*" ?

Paul's Defence before Agrippa

ACTS xxvi, 1-15

vv. 1-3. Note Paul's characteristic gesture (cp. xiii, 16; xx, 34; xxi, 40).

vv. 4-5. What does Paul argue from his former manner of life in trying to show that he was "in the innermost circle of Judaism"?

vv. 6-8. He is now judged for the hope of the Messiah, which Jesus fulfilled by His resurrection, and pleads with the Sadducean Agrippa to believe in the possibility of the resurrection, to which his own Scriptures bear witness (1 Kings xvii; 2 Kings iv).

vv. 9-11. What new statements have we here, unrecorded elsewhere, of the extent of Paul's former persecution?

Paul's "vote" does not necessarily imply that he was a member of the Sanhedrim, which was composed of aristocrats and old men.

What would Paul's age have been at his conversion?

He had striven to make Christians blaspheme by denying Christ, as Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, had tried to compel the Christians to call upon the gods, to worship the emperor, and to blaspheme Christ (Knowling).

vv. 12-15. Why had Paul been "mad" against the Christians?

Note the statements which indicate the objective character of St. Paul's vision.

The apostle was kicking against the goad, *i.e.*, dissatisfied at heart and enslaved by the law, unconsciously fighting against God. What lesson do you learn from Paul's conversion?

Personal thought. *Why persecutest thou Me?* (v. 14). "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto Me." Christ identifies Himself with every humble believer—every member of His body. If I do evil, or think evil of His humblest follower, I am sinning against Him. Whatever good I am doing to men I am doing to Him. What then is my relation to Christ as measured by my ministry to men?

The Heavenly Vision

ACTS xxvi, 16-32

vv. 16-18. These verses contain a summary of revelations made to the apostle during his first days in Damascus. They sum up a "process" of revelation. What was Christ's ultimate purpose in Paul's conversion and what in mine?

What three statements show the condition of the Gentiles? (Remember you and I are Gentiles). And into what three privileges are we brought by Christ? (cp. Eph. ii, 12-20).

"Sanctified by faith in Me," that is, made holy or loving by personal association with Jesus.

vv. 19-20. Note here the key-note of Paul's character and the secret of his success.

vv. 21-23. How did Paul pass his two years in prison, and to what classes did he appeal?

vv. 24-25. Festus interrupts with impatience, "that great learning of thine doth turn thee to madness."

What statement of Paul's had angered Festus in its personal application to him and all Romans? (cp. v. 23).

vv. 26-29. Paul turns from the Roman sceptic to the Jew, who should have believed in the prophecies of the Messiah's suffering and resurrection.

Note the boldness of Paul's personal appeal and observe Agrippa's answer (v. 28, R.V.). Was he speaking in earnest or in sarcasm?

vv. 30-32. What impression had Paul made as to his character and his relation to the charges made against him?

Personal thought. *I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision* (v. 19). Obedience to light was the key to this man's character. Even after the vision he might have returned to Jerusalem as a respectable rabbi or a timid member of the Sanhedrim.

To me also, as I study this scripture, will come visions of Christ; of the need of my fellow-countrymen; of my life-work, and of daily duty. Let me walk in the light, obedient to every vision of truth!

The Voyage to Rome

ACTS xxvii, 1-20

vv. 1-3. Note the presence of Luke and the return to the pronoun "we" from xxvii, 1 to xxviii, 16. Ramsay thinks that Luke and Aristarchus (v. 2) must have gone as Paul's attendants, for a Roman prisoner could not take his friends, but would be entitled to two slaves.

The "other prisoners" had been in all probability already condemned to death and were going to supply the stream of human victims to amuse the populace by their death in the arena.

vv. 4-8. The ship was probably a government grain transport from Egypt (v. 38). Follow its course upon the map.

vv. 9-12. Navigation was dangerous after September 14, and the "fast," or great day of atonement, fell in A.D. 59 on October 5. After November all navigation ceased.

Picture to yourself the meeting held for counsel, the centurion presiding. How many gave advice?

Compare Paul's caution with his later courage (cp. v. 22).

vv. 13-20. Read carefully this vivid description of the storm, as given by Luke with his Greek instinct for the sea.

A typhoon suddenly fell from the mountains of Crete towering 7,000 feet above them. They haul in the little boat, which was in tow, gird the ship with ropes about the hull to strengthen it against the strain of the storm, take in a reef and keep her head to the wind to avoid being driven on the African quicksands (vv. 16, 17).

Follow the course upon the map. If Malta was 476 miles away, at the rate of a mile and a half an hour, how many days would elapse before they were shipwrecked? (cp. v. 33; xxviii, 1).

Personal thought. *We were driven* (v. 15). The wind was God's wind, and even the storm bore him Rome-ward. Against the advice of his fellow-Christians (xxi, 12), the raging hatred of the Jews, the cupidity and compromise of Roman officials, and the mistakes of men (xxvii, 21)—amid all the storms of nature and against the opposition of human wills, God's hand guides all, and "all things work together for good to those who love Him."

The Shipwreck

ACTS xxvii, 21-37

vv. 21-26. Read these impressive verses, and picture the dramatic situation. When all had lost hope (v. 20), "then Paul stood forth in the midst of them." Towering head and shoulders above them all, he reminds them of his caution and their mistake, not in order to say "I told you so," but that they may now heed his advice. What light do these verses throw upon the character of Paul? What evidence is there that he had been in prayer for his fellow-passengers?

Note the words "be of good cheer," twice repeated (vv. 22, 25, 36). Courage is catching; happiness is contagious!

What statement do you find of Paul's creed in v. 25? Notice the time and circumstances under which it was spoken.

vv. 27-32. Contrast the spirit of Paul with the spirit of the sailors (v. 30), and the soldiers (v. 42). Note his caution (v. 9), his promptitude (v. 30), his wisdom (v. 31), his common sense (v. 33), his confidence (v. 34), his witness to God (v. 35), his faith (v. 25), his victory (vv. 36, 44).

vv. 33-37. Read this vivid description; note its details. What lesson do you learn from Paul's character in this shipwreck? He had already been shipwrecked once before, clinging to a spar for a night and a day (2 Cor. xi, 25).

v. 34. Compare Christ's assurance (Luke xii, 7).

Personal thought. *I believe God.* Here is St. Paul's creed. How it raises him above circumstances! At midnight, with no haven in sight; in the midst of the storm; the Jews behind, plotting to kill him; the Romans before, waiting to behead him; in the midst of a panic-stricken crew, who had lost all hope, his words of good cheer rang out in the night, and re-echo across the ages. In the darkest hour and in every trial and temptation, let us make these great words our own, saying, "*Be of good cheer, for I believe God.*"

The Shipwreck (*Contd.*)

ACTS xxvii, 38—xxviii, 10

vv. 37-44. Picture this scene in your imagination.

A soldier forfeited his own life if his prisoner escaped (cp. xvi, 27). Note the centurion's kindness to Paul. Think of the influence of the apostle during the voyage, and of the probable report carried by the centurion to his fellow-officers in Rome, and of the effect on the prætorian guard (cp. Phil. i, 13. R.V.).

xxiii, 1-6. Note the vividness of Luke's description: the cold, the driving rain, the smoking fire and the 276 souls huddled about it. Find the island of Malta upon the map.

The people are called "barbarians," meaning simply that they were non-Greeks to St. Luke, who was a Greek himself. They were Phœnician-speaking Carthaginians.

What act shows St. Paul's energy and enterprise? Note how he adapts himself to every situation. "If there is but one willing man of God in a situation, it is to a certain extent true that God Himself is there, and whatever can be done by God through a willing man, will be done."

What estimate did the barbarians form of Paul? (vv. 4-6).

vv. 7-10. Who would the "us" include to whom entertainment was given by Publius? What was the influence of the Christians upon the island?

Read again the account of the shipwreck, making a study of the character of the Apostle Paul in these various situations.

Personal thought. *A murderer . . . a god.* "They changed their minds." Note the shallowness and fickleness of human judgment. On a former occasion Paul had first been worshipped as a god, then stoned and left for dead.

Let us judge not according to appearances. How vain it is to seek the praise of men; and how charitable it should make us in our judgment of others. Remember that we cannot know another human heart nor the temptations and difficulties and motives of another life.

Rome at Last

ACTS xxviii, 11-22

vv. 11-15. They found another grain ship, bearing the images of Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Jupiter. Follow out their course upon the map. Note the Christian communities already in Italy. In Pompeii, near Puteoli, Christianity was being discussed in the gossip of the loungers in the streets before the city was destroyed in A.D. 79. The forum of Appius was forty-five miles from Rome on the Appian Way, and the Three Taverns some thirty miles from the city, where these two deputations came to greet the apostle and "Paul thanked God and took courage."

Do you fully appreciate your fellow Christians. Are you such a Christian friend as to make your fellow Christians take courage at sight of you?

v. 16. How had Paul planned to enter Rome? How was his limitation turned to blessing? (cp. Phil. i, 12-14).

Perhaps through the influence of a friend, the centurion of the voyage, Paul was permitted this liberty (cp. xxvii, 43).

vv. 17-19. In what order and with what message does the apostle meet the Christians, Jews and Gentiles? (cp. vv. 15, 17, 30). Why was Paul anxious to meet the Jews at the earliest possible moment?

vv. 20-22. Why was Paul a prisoner? (v. 20).

Note his tact in dealing with the Jews. How had they been impressed with Christianity previously?

Note the indications of God's providence and of the activity of the risen Christ in the voyage, shipwreck and stay in Rome.

Personal thought. *For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.* Paul was the prisoner of Christ, not of Jewish hatred nor of Roman injustice. The scars he had received at Lystra and Philippi were "the marks of Christ." He accepted his limitations and triumphed in them. If he was bound from Spain, he was yet bound to a soldier. He was bound from travelling, but was bound to the epistles of the imprisonment. For the hope of Israel and for the hope of India let us joyfully suffer.

Last Days in Rome

ACTS xxviii, 23-31

vv. 23-24. What was Paul's message to the Jews, and what argument did he gain from the law and the prophets for Jesus as the Messiah, in that all-day meeting?

vv. 25-27. What was the significance of the earnest warning to the Jews in the words of Isaiah, as used by Paul and by Christ Himself? (cp. Matt. xiii, 13-16).

v. 28. What is the last utterance of the great apostle to the Gentiles? And where, previously in his journeys, had he turned from the Jews to the Gentiles?

vv. 30-31. The apostle now leaves his temporary lodging (v. 23) and occupies a hired residence, protected by Roman law from Jewish hate.

Think of the pathos and limitation of the words, "two whole years." How did the apostle occupy his time? Imagine these years in their Christian activity and in Paul's prayer-life and the epistles which he then wrote.

The author has carried us steadily Rome-ward; the centre of Christianity has been transferred from Jerusalem, the capital of the Jews, to Rome, the capital of the human race; from the gospel of the circumcision to the universal gospel, preached in the universal city; and from the kingdom of the Jews to the "Kingdom of God."

v. 31. In how far has the purpose of the writer been fulfilled? (Acts i, 8). Did the author probably intend to finish his book at this point without further record of the apostle's life or death, or was he, perhaps, like the Apostle Paul, beheaded in the persecutions of Nero?

Personal thought. The Book of Acts began with Christ's command to witness from Jerusalem. It closes with the fulfilment of that witness in Rome—the world's capital.

I, too, have a command to obey, a life to live, a mission to fulfil. Am I fulfilling my responsibility as a witness for Christ? Shall I finish the work which God has given me to do?

Review

ACTS xxi, 15—xxviii, 22

Let us now review rapidly this fourth section of the Book of Acts, covering the apostle's arrest, imprisonment and voyage to Rome. Recall the importance which the author attaches to this portion of the book.

Note that he gives four long chapters to the important events of twelve days. The author feels that not Paul only, but Christianity itself, is on trial before the Roman empire.

Notice his emphasis throughout of the favour of Roman officials, and the appeal that he thus makes for the recognition of Christianity as not disloyal to the State.

Note the substance of each chapter. Write down in your Bible some title or heading which will recall the subject of each chapter to your mind.

What great lesson do you learn for your own life from this closing section of Acts?

Among others, note the lesson of:—

Paul's limitations. Limited in space by the chain which bound him, limited in time "for two whole years," limited in strength and limited in circumstances, Paul yet fulfils the plan of God.

With relation to his limitations:—

1. He accepted and rejoiced in them (2 Cor. xii, 10).
2. He understood them. If he was bound from Spain, he was bound to a Roman soldier. He does not fret about Spain, but improves the present opportunity.
3. He triumphed in his limitations; they fell out to the progress of the gospel (Phil. i, 12-14).

His sufferings gave birth to a deeper spiritual life; to the establishing of the church in Rome, and to the epistles of the imprisonment.

What lesson may we learn for the limitations of our own life?

The Epistles of the Imprisonment:

Ephesians

During the next four days let us read rapidly portions of these epistles, written during St. Paul's confinement in Rome, in order that we may gain a picture of his circumstances and learn the deeper lessons of his life and character.

If time does not permit, however, the student may spend the remaining days, if desired, in reviewing the Book of Acts as a whole.

For two days let us study the Epistle to the Ephesians.

The letter was intended, probably, not only for the Ephesians, but for all the churches of the Province of Asia, which had heard the word during St. Paul's stay of three years in Ephesus (Acts xix, 10, 26). Colossæ, Hierapolis and the seven churches of Rev. ii and iii, would perhaps be included in this epistle.

Note the passages in the epistle which show the sufferings of the Apostle Paul during this Roman imprisonment (cp. Eph. iii, 1-13 ; iv, 1 ; vi, 20, etc.).

Study the passages which reflect the deep spiritual life of the Apostle Paul, and note his message to us out of this imprisonment (Eph. i, 3-4 ; ii, 4-10 ; iii, 14-21 ; v, 18-21 ; vi, 17-24).

Note the apostle's superiority to circumstances. He is in prison, yet in "heavenly places." Five times he uses this phrase. He is in heavenly places of blessing (Eph. i, 3), of power (i, 20), of rest (ii, 6), of service (iii, 10), of victory (vi, 12).

Personal thought. (Eph. i, 3). "Blessed be God who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

The Letter to the Colossians

Colossæ was one of the three mission stations together with Laodicea and Hierapolis, on the banks of the Lycus river, a hundred miles east of Ephesus (see map).

St. Paul himself had probably never visited Colossæ (Col. ii, 1), but while in Ephesus, "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word" (Acts xix, 10-26).

Epaphras comes from Colossæ to Rome, bringing the news of the new heresy which was threatening the church (Col. i, 8; iv, 12, 13).

This heresy seems to have been a mixture of Jewish ritualism and oriental mysticism, which tended to rob Christ of His sole pre-eminence.

Ch. i, 2. Note the key to the epistle, "in Christ", occurring some twenty times.

Note the depth of the apostle's prayer-life during his imprisonment (i, 1-12).

Study Paul's conception of Christ, observing :—

1. His pre-eminence in relation to the Father (i, 13, 19).
2. His pre-eminence in relation to the creation (*vv.* 15, 16),
3. His pre-eminence in relation to the Church (*vv.* 18, 22; ii, 9, 10; iii, 1-4).

Study the apostle's sufferings and his attitude to them during this Roman imprisonment (i, 24-29).

Study the circumstances of the writer while in Rome (iv, 3, 9, 18).

Personal thought. *That in all things He might have the pre-eminence* (i, 18). In my time, in my plans, in my thoughts, in my words, in all my life, Christ shall have the pre-eminence.

The Letter to Philemon

Let us study this exquisite little epistle as a model for Christian letter-writing for all time.

This is the only existing letter addressed by the apostle to an individual upon a private matter. "It is only one sample of numberless letters, which must have been written to his many friends and disciples by one of St. Paul's eager temperament and warm affection in the course of a long and chequered life" (Lightfoot).

Luther says: "This epistle showeth a right, noble, lovely example of Christian love. Here we see how St. Paul layeth himself out for poor Onesimus, even as Christ did for us with God." Renan says, "It is a true little masterpiece of the art of letter-writing."

Onesimus, who carried the letter, was evidently a slave who had robbed his master Philemon at Colossæ and had run away to Rome. There he had met Paul and had become a Christian. Paul sends Onesimus back with this letter, asking forgiveness of his Christian master.

What may we learn of Paul's circumstances at Rome at this time? Note his expectation of speedy release. (Contrast it with his certainty of death, at his second trial in 2 Tim. iv, 6, 8). What do you learn from this epistle of the character of Paul, of Philemon, of Onesimus?

What suggestion may we learn from this epistle for our own letter-writing? And what lesson may we learn for our own lives?

Personal thought. *No longer a slave, but a brother beloved (v. 16).* If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away.

To the true Christian slavery is gone; caste does not exist; we are "all one in Christ."

The Letter to the Philippians

Recall the beginning of the gospel in Philippi—the apostle's personal work with an Asiatic Jewish woman, a Greek slave-girl and a Roman jailor.

Let us study both the condition of the church in Philippi and of Paul in Rome.

The relation of the apostle to this little church was one of close friendship and tender love.

Their unwavering loyalty, their loving sacrifice in repeatedly contributing to his need (Phil. iv, 15, 16) and the constant means of communication he had with them kept them close to his heart. Even in his imprisonment at Rome they had sent Epaphroditus with another gift and a message of comfort (ii, 25).

Paul now sends this letter back to the church. He attacks no dangerous errors as in Galatians, no irregularities as in the Corinthians, expounds no elaborate doctrine as in Romans. It is just a friendly letter of love and gratitude from a man chained to a Roman soldier, now opening his heart and craving sympathy from the little persecuted church that stood first in faith and love and in the apostle's affection.

Study Phil. i, 12-26. Note the apostle's circumstances in Rome, and his confident hope of release after trial by the emperor Nero (Phil. iii, 5-14). Study this summary of Paul's life and this revelation of his character.

Phil. iv, 6, 7, 10-23. Study the apostle's deepening spiritual life and experience.

From these four epistles, written from Rome, what conception do you form of the character of the Apostle Paul, and what lesson do you learn for your own life?

Review of Acts

Re-read the Introduction. Review the Chronological Table.

Read the key-verse in i, 8, and glance rapidly over the book, recalling the plan of the writer.

Review the four chief divisions of the Acts, and note the plan of the writer in recording :—

- i-vii. The founding of the Church among the Jews.
- viii-xii. The period of expansion throughout Palestine.
- xiii-xxi. Paul's three missionary journeys in Asia and Europe.
- xxi-xxviii. The imprisonment and the journey to Rome.

Note the writer's appeal for the recognition of Christianity in recording the favour of Roman officials :—

Sergius Paulus, the Governor of Cyprus, believes (xiii, 12).

The Roman magistrates at Philippi apologize when they hear that Paul is a Roman citizen (xvi, 39).

Gallio protects Paul in Corinth and allows him freedom of speech (xviii, 12-17).

The priests of Ephesus and the town clerk favour the apostle (xix, 31, 35).

Claudius Lysias pronounces him innocent (xxiii, 26-29).

Felix, the worst of governors, is tolerant to Paul (xxiv, 23).

Festus pronounces Paul innocent (xxv, 25 ; xxvi, 31).

Agrippa would have liberated him (xxvi, 32).

The centurion protects him, and he is allowed liberty in Rome (xxvii, 43 ; xxviii, 30).

Think through the Book of Acts, "letting this wonderful panorama of Christian history pass before you."

Record the best thoughts from your study of the Book of Acts.

Review of Acts (*Concluded*)

Study the great doctrines of the Book of Acts.

Among other truths, note the following :—

1. The providence of God, over-ruling all, guiding all through adverse circumstances, through storms and shipwreck ; amid colliding human wills, God works all things together for good.

2. The Person of Jesus, and His ceaseless activity throughout the entire book.

3. The Holy Spirit ; His coming to the church and to individuals.

4. The Christian religion, divine in its origin, fulfilling the promise of Judaism, yet separated from it, and establishing the universal kingdom of God in the earth.

5. The way of salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

6. The duty of witness-bearing. Note the examples of the apostles and of the early Christians.

Compare their conditions with those of modern times.

What has been the result of the study of the Book of Acts upon your own life ?

7. *Seeing that these things are so, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness* (2 Pet. iii, 11).

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St. Paul Evangelized

of St. PAUL

GN MISSIONS

PART OF THE EARTH

9	Paul a Prisoner		
	Jerusalem	Cæsarea	Rome
	A.D. 57	A.D. 57-59	A.D. 60-62

DIAGRAM OF ACTS

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JEWS Evangelized

Work of St. PETER

HOME MISSIONS

Key verse Acts 1, 8

JERUSALEM	JUDÆA AND SAMARIA
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Apostles	Peter and John	Stephen	Philip	Ananias	Peter
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Place	IN JERUSALEM	SAMARIA—CÆSAREA
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Time A.D. 29	A.D. 30	A.D. 31	A.D. 44
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GENTILES Evangelized

Work of St. PAUL

FOREIGN MISSIONS

THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH

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